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THE PILLARS OF THE TEMPLE

THE stage is set. With bridgeheads now secured over both Rhine and Oder, Allied forces are completing their preparations, West and East, for synchronised attacks against both ends of a parallelogram bounded by Emden and Cologne, the Stettiner Haff and Görlitz. Within that area, flat for the most part and well suited for mechanised warfare, the German armies under Himmler and Model can expect nothing but defeat under an ultimately crushing weight of numbers and material. In so far as the course of war is ever predictable, it seems reasonable to hope that, within three months at most, General Eisenhower will greet Marshal Zhukov somewhere between Magdeburg and Hanover.

It is even more certain that the Nazi leaders have laid plans to meet that eventuality. Indeed, the lines of their future strategy are already foreshadowed by actions taken—actions intelligible only as precursors of a campaign which might fittingly be styled "Operation Samson." The objective is dual—to delay as long as possible the end of hostilities, and to create in Europe the maximum of economic chaos. The means chosen are, first, to concentrate within the defensible mountain perimeter of Bohemia, Austria and Bavaria the "hard core" of the German army—S.S., Panzer and Paratroop regiments, perhaps with Allied hostages as an additional asset; secondly, to obstruct the relief and reconstruction of liberated territories by intensified U-boat activities, by long-range V-weapons, by Fifth Column sabotage, and, above all, by denying to the Allies access to ports.

In the light of those intentions German strategy is explicable. Norway, with its hungry population, is held as the main, final U-boat base despite the shortage of divisions on Rhine and Oder; garrisons are deliberately left behind to block the mouths of the Loire and the Garonne; troops who can ill be spared are assigned to the defence of Holland, not primarily to retain firing-points for V-bombs, but to stop relief to the starving Dutch; Kesselring clings to the Apennines in order that Genoa may be denied to Allied supplies for Milan and Turin; even when Zhukov's guns can be heard in Berlin, Germany's chief counter-measure is an offensive in Hungary, designed, if possible, to secure some 1945 Danubian grain for the "Reduit." The Reich itself will doubtless be sacrificed to this strategy of immolation; the defence of Königsberg and Danzig to the last bullet may well be repeated in every North German port, from Stettin to Hamburg.

This is a plan framed by desperate men who see no possibility of avoiding defeat in large-scale military operations in the North German plain, and probably little chance of seriously impeding the flow of essential *military* supplies to the Allies. Their hope is that, even if they fail to sow discord between Russia and her Western Allies, they can prolong on the Continent conditions of starvation and turmoil with which U.N.R.R.A., deprived of marginal tonnage above military requirements, will be powerless to cope, and in which surviving Fascist elements in all countries—outposts of the "Reduit"—can defeat every effort at economic and social reconstruction. They thus hope that a Continent, already disillusioned with the fruits of "liberation," will increasingly turn against the Allies, and that Fascist and gangster groups, still loose in Europe, will be their underground auxiliaries.

It is a plan which must not be lightly dismissed as a romantic gesture of doomed gangsters. It is a serious, cold-blooded endeavour, backed apparently by the German General Staff, to wrest political victory out of defeat in arms. It can be countered successfully by the Allies only if they are on their guard against pro-Nazi diplomatic manœuvres, whether their origin be Big Business, anti-Bolshevik panic-mongers, or (as the Swiss press forecasts) the Vatican's "Black International"; and only if the Governments of Britain and the U.S.A. realise in time that it is just as essential to provide Europe with shipping, food, transport and work, as it is to defeat the enemy in the field.

The Case of Rumania

When Mr. Vyshinsky flew from Moscow to Bucharest and insisted brusquely that King Michael must dismiss General Radescu and reconstruct the Rumanian Government, he was clearly acting at the behest of Marshal Malinovsky. It was not primarily that Radescu, an old-style reactionary, was obstructing the promised agrarian reforms; his acquiescence in pro-Fascist disturbances and his failure to purge collaborators from the administration took on a still more sinister light when the Germans were mounting a large-scale offensive against Western Hungary. If he was involved in pro-Axis activities, it was a blunder to give him asylum in the British Embassy. His successor, Dr. Grozea, of the Ploughmen's Party, has been approved by Moscow as politically "reliable." Proof, however, that except on military grounds the Russians are at the present stage not rejecting "penitents" is afforded by their acceptance, as Deputy Prime Minister, of Mr. Tatarescu, who hitched Rumania to the Axis in 1940. Russia's formal approval of the re-incorporation of Transylvania in Rumania (with welcome safeguards for minorities) is evidently intended to strengthen Dr. Grozea's hand. His first task is to protect Marshal Malinovsky's line of communications from Fifth Column sabotage; his next, presumably, is to carry out genuine land reform and purge Rumania of collaborators. In Rumanian reconstruction Britain can play little part; and only mischief can result if our local representatives misinterpret the Yalta accord and, wittingly or unwittingly, give encouragement to the Conservative elements led by Maniu and Bratianu—to say nothing of the big landlords and Iron Guard survivors.

The Roatta Incident

The escape of that peculiarly odious war-criminal, General Roatta, has exposed the Bonomi Government to the anger of the Roman Left. Mass demonstrations of protest were led not merely by the Socialists but also by the Communists, who have their Ministers in the Cabinet. The suspicion that the official services on whom it has to rely are permeated by ex-Fascists is certainly well founded. These people may not be partisans of Mussolini, but they belong, like Roatta himself, to the Royalist circle grouped round Badoglio. At every turn the efforts of the Administration to carry out a thorough purge have been thwarted by the Allied Control. The result is that this Government of the Left is being steadily discredited by its apparent inefficiency. It cannot secure the loyalty to the New Order of the bureaucracy and the police, nor can it assure food and work to the masses. One symptom of the general cynicism is the discovery in Rome of an underground Fascist organisation, the Unione Proletaria, which is said to have 20,000 members. It is in reality a gangster organisation, perhaps of the *Mafia* type, which throve on blackmail and the black market, and was on good terms with the Carabinieri. It has its links with the Separatist Movement in Sicily, which, in its turn, relies chiefly on the discontent of unemployed farm-labourers and sulphur miners. Its Fascism need not be taken too seriously. Fascism will not come back openly, wearing its faded black shirt. But when Bonomi and his colleagues are still further discredited by the impotence imposed on them, there will be a cry for strong government. Then the decisive fact may be that an army of sorts has been created under Royalist officers, not to fight the Germans, but to overawe the masses. They, meanwhile, will have been weakened, partly by frustration and internal divisions, but more by the Gestapo's slaughter of their virile elements, the partisans and workers of the North. It is true that a relaxation of the Allied Control has been promised, and that more food is said to be on its way. We shall believe in the reality of the change when the Bonomi Government is allowed to dismiss the 35 prefects it marked down long ago for removal. This subtle policy may succeed for a time in bringing back the Old Order, but it will leave Italy destitute of ideals and hope.

Political Trends in Japan

When the fall of Saipan swept Tojo and Nakano from power, the Japanese demand for an identity of power and responsibility was met by the appointment of Koiso, who in Japan is probably regarded as the man most responsible for the war. His Government was a compromise between his own militaristic communism, Admiral Yonai's conservative capitalism and Machida's demands for greater participation of the nation in the conduct of the war. Koiso's Government did not fall with Manila because it is almost irreplaceable. The only alternative is a super-Nazi Government; and Admiral Kobayashi, lately Governor General of Formosa, is trying to produce a one-party organisation on these lines to replace the present coalition supporting the Government. Whether he can secure mass backing is doubtful. There will be public demands for the continuance of Koiso's Government on the grounds that he caused the war, and must carry it on; and he alone has succeeded in collecting an all-party group at the head of things. Kobayashi may stand for a greater effort from the common Japanese man, but he cannot provide a plan for the use of those efforts which will alter the fundamental nature of a situation already so unfavourable to Japan. Associated, as he is, with principles of repression and tyranny, his succession to the Premiership would cause despair.

Monopolies in the Air

When the U.S. Government decided to back Pan-American Airways' demand for competitive operation of all air routes, and when the British Government at Chicago failed to support the plan for the international ownership of civil aviation sponsored by Australia, New Zealand and France, it was evident that the future development of commercial flying under the British flag would take a form repugnant to common sense. The scheme now published is a typical Coalition compromise, with the usual bias in favour of large-scale monopoly capitalism. It is recognised that private enterprise cannot be relied on to provide services on unprofitable routes which must be maintained in the public interest; and the "chosen instrument," the B.O.A.C., will play a large part as a public corporation in developing, notably, the overseas routes to the Dominions. There is to be Governmental guidance and direction; but into the projected air monopolies, which will look to the Government for protection against all alien competition, there have been allowed to creep all the vested interests—railway companies, travel agencies and shipping lines—who have succeeded in staking a claim to participation in airways' profits. Thus we seem likely to get, from the point of view both of efficiency and international relations, the worst of all worlds.

The Labour Internationals

The International Socialist Conference was a very small and uninfluential affair in comparison with its Trade Union predecessor. There can hardly be said nowadays to be a world Socialist movement in any real sense. The gulf between the die-hard Social Democrats and the Communists is obviously too wide to be bridged internationally at this stage: the hope of bridging it lies in such domestic collaboration as is already being tried out in France, Belgium, Czechoslovakia and a number of other liberated countries. If Social Democrats and Communists in these countries can work together, it may be possible to get some sort of agreement on the international plane. But this clearly cannot be done now, and to attempt it would do positive harm until the national movements have had time to rebuild themselves and to discuss who their post-war leaders are to be. Meanwhile the Trade Union Committee set up in London is active. From Paris it is now transferring itself to Washington, and from Washington it proposes to proceed to San Francisco, where its main task is to put forward the case for making the Economic and Social Council of the new World Organisation a reality and a power.

Australia and the Banks

The banking legislation introduced by the Australian Labour Government is naturally meeting with strong opposition from the private banking interests. Although Australia nominally possesses in the Commonwealth Bank a public banking institution with considerable powers, the method of conducting its affairs through a Council dominated by the private banks has in practice made it subject to their will and prevented it from developing either as an effective rival or as a central planning and controlling organ in financial affairs. Much the most important of the changes now proposed is that which will put the Commonwealth Bank directly under Government control by doing away with the Council and making the governors responsible to the Commonwealth Treasurer. The other part of the proposed legislation makes permanent the wartime control over the private banks, which will have their profits limited, will be compelled to lend their surplus funds to the Government at fixed rates, and will have their investment operations strictly supervised by the Commonwealth Bank. These provisions will, in effect, mean that, although the banks will not be nationalised, new business will tend to fall mainly into the hands of the Commonwealth Bank. It will also mean that the Government, through the Commonwealth Bank, will have effective control of monetary conditions, including foreign exchange, and will be able to follow an expansionist policy of full employment without fear of being held up by external pressure from financial interests in London or elsewhere.

The Dockers' Grievances

The recent London dock strike has brought into the open the widespread dislike felt by the rank and file dockers and stevedores for the National Dock Labour Corporation. It is true that the Corporation have in recent years conferred on the dockers considerable benefits of decasualisation, guaranteed payment and improved working conditions. But the dockers do not like it, primarily because they regard it as taking away their freedom. The work of loading and unloading ships is not uniform, and many of the men are both specialists in particular kinds of cargo and accustomed to work together in the same gangs or groups. They acutely dislike being assigned to this or that vessel or gang without being given any choice. That is why in several cases they have refused to use the special buildings erected by the Corporation for signing names, and have preferred, even in drenching rain, to stay outside the dock gates so as to get a better chance of picking and choosing their work. Questions of pay no doubt come into the matter; for some cargoes are more remunerative—as well as being easier—than others. But the main issue does not seem to be that of payment. It is to be hoped that the enquiry now being held, on the strength of which the strikers were persuaded to return to work, will probe fully the men's grievances. They exist at other ports besides London.

Those Allowances

The stupidity of the attempt to make the child's allowance, already cut down to 5s., subject to income tax is nearly past belief, and the Treasury can hardly be allowed to get away with it. Nor is it likely that the refusal to make the allowance payable in normal cases to the mother will survive the ordeal of last week's debate. On the other hand, the Government is likely to stand firm in its refusal to grant the allowance to the first child; and something can be said for the view that an increase in the sum paid for children beyond the first ought to have priority. Much has been made of the promises of free milk and free school meals; but is it proposed in the near future to make meals available all the year round, including holidays, or to do anything in this matter for the children under school age? The argument that the allowance ought to be payable to the father because there are some bad mothers is too silly for words.

The Education Regulations

The new Education Regulations came out this week and will enter into force on April 1st. They cover both primary and secondary (but not direct grant) schools in one set of regulations, and make a beginning of applying a common rule to teachers in both types of school. The maximum size of classes is put at 30 for secondary schools, and at 15 for the "under three's," but remains as high as 40 for most primary school groups; and even these maxima may be exceeded for the time being. A new comprehensive class of "qualified teachers" is introduced; and all teachers not eligible for enrolment become "temporary teachers," but may, of course, be able to qualify later. All new teachers will begin by serving a year on probation—or two years if they enter under an emergency shortened training scheme. During probation teachers will be placed under supervision in "schools of good educational standard." School terms, save in special cases, must total at least forty weeks in the year, and provision is to be made for parents to take their children away for not more than a fortnight during term where staggered holidays make this necessary. In general, the new Regulations are an advance, and are based on acceptance of the main recommendations of the McNair Committee. But they are full of temporary exceptions, many of which will unfortunately long outlast the war on account of the shortage of teachers.

Landlubbers Lying Down Below

A Conference of six hundred and sixty local authorities has issued a call to the Government for a new Land Bill as an immediately urgent measure. Failing such a Bill, either implementing the Uthwatt Report or putting something effective in its place, housing policy is practically at a standstill, apart from crude emergency measures, and no progress can be made with any major town-planning project. The consequence is that the failure to agree about land acquisition and compensation is now being freely used as an excuse for the housing muddle. In effect, the Government is arguing that, because it has refused to do A, it cannot be blamed for failing to do B. This type of argument may go down with the kind of people who would much sooner see no houses, except those built by profitable private enterprise, than give way one inch in the matter of landlords' rights; but it is not likely to appeal to anyone else.

PARLIAMENT: Late Night Extra

Wednesday afternoon.

THE annual debates on the three Service Estimates produced neither great oratory nor great drama. There was no climax so tense as that of the debate on Service Pay last year. But Tuesday's debate (on the Army) made an interesting first test of the revised hours of sittings and the ability of Members (many of whom had been expected to attend a Standing Committee from 10.30 to 12.45 the same morning) to endure a sitting lasting from 2.15 p.m. to 12.22 a.m. Both Members and Minister showed signs of wear by midnight: Grigg exposed his distaste for the House of Commons in a snarling joke about his regular weekly question-time—"the 'Tuesday Serenade' which I have to put up with"; on which Members cried "It's your job," and "That's what you're paid £5,000 a year for."

Most of the day's debate was dull. Gallacher, moving an amendment on demobilisation, did not rise fully to the occasion, and seemed hampered by adherence to notes and the narrow terms of his own motion. Grigg's opening statement was, indeed, sufficiently inspiring and, for him, eloquent, though delivered in a monotone; Arthur Henderson gave solid information about the demobilisation scheme.

A quadrangular fracas very late in the debate, in which Stokes, Hogg, Mr. Speaker and Aneurin Bevan were involved, led to a pitched battle next day: the Prime Minister, flushed and furious, appealed for the Speaker's "protection," and demanded that Stokes withdraw his previous night's allegation that the P.M. and the Minister of Production had "lied" about tanks. After a prolonged and noisy scene, Stokes eventually found a formula which enabled him to withdraw the unparliamentary word without withdrawing the gravamen of his charge: his speech had indeed been more formidable and closely-argued than some of his extempore effusions, and Grigg made no attempt to answer it seriously beyond saying that, while Stokes claimed "the soldiers' opinion" on his side, the Government could claim the backing of the most successful soldier since Wellington—Field-Marshal Montgomery.

In the other Service debates points that stand out include the latest instalment of Hopkinson's serial vendetta against the Air Ministry, and Alexander's thrilling and comprehensive account of the naval aspects of D-day. Lady Astor was perhaps optimistic, however, in saying: "I should like him . . . to make every Co-operator in the country read his speech. That he can do."

There was universal praise for Jowitt's grave and meticulous handling of the Family Allowances Bill, and, of course, for its "grandmother," Miss Rathbone. Beveridge showed that he is not yet an experienced Parliamentarian; he was quite flummoxed by interjections from Prescott, a bright young Tory who can hardly know so much as he about the subject.

Eden repeated at question-time his cautious assurance that neutral replies to the Government's warning against the harbouring of war criminals had been "broadly speaking, not unsatisfactory." When Sir Herbert Williams (Croydon, S.) persisted in some rather fussy enquiries about the allocation of certain private rooms in the House, J. J. Davidson (Maryhill) won a loud all-party laugh by saying "Would my right honourable friend consider allotting a room to the Member for Croydon, installing him there, and locking the door?"

PONTIFEX MINOR

PEACE, BUT WITH PLENTY?

DYNAMOS, dwellings or *divertissements*? Horse-power, houses or Houp-La? Here, crudely but succinctly, are the three rival claimants to the nation's post-war potential of man-power and materials. The size of the slice each will obtain depends on the use the public makes of its spending-power, including the very considerable mass of income which it has "saved" during the war. (These, be it noted, are "savings" only in the sense that the money has not been spent by individuals; it *has* been spent by the State on war efforts from which, by and large, no real assets will survive.) Can there be much doubt what the instinctive impulse of the public, unrestrained, will be? The homeless minority will clamour for houses at all costs; the majority will opt for Houp-La—meaning not merely "cakes and ale" but all the consumption and semi-durable goods—clothes, house-furnishings, refrigerators and vacuum-cleaners, gramophones, radio-sets and motor cars—so hard to come by in six years of war. And in the category of *divertissements* we must clearly include capital investment in inessentials like luxury cinemas, Grand Babylon hotels and millionaire flats.

There has recently been much erudite discussion between economists as to the danger lest accumulation of capital in this country, when things have settled down (say, in 1948), may prove inadequate to provide both for "social" construction—houses, schools and hospitals—and for the admittedly necessary re-equipment of our basic industries, public utilities and transport. (Readers who want to study estimated figures are referred to Mr. Kaldor's statistics in the Appendix to Sir William Beveridge's report on Full Employment and to an article entitled "Post-War Arithmetic" in the *Economist* of February 24th) Into these detailed, but obviously speculative calculations, we do not now propose to enter. Our own view, stated consistently in these columns, is that, if we plan efficiently the use of our resources, we should have no difficulty, after we have overcome the immediate post-war transition period, in affording both an adequate level of consumption and all the essential schemes of industrial and social improvement for which capital investment will be required. With this proposition Mr. Kaldor agrees; the *Economist*, taking a more pessimistic estimate both of future national income and of the probable rate of savings, is rather less sanguine.

In this controversy we see room for legitimate differences of opinion or, rather, of forecast. There is, however, unanimity among all reputable economists that, at least during the transitional period (which may extend well beyond 1948), there will be a chaos of inflation and under-employment, leaving the country under-housed and industrially ill-equipped at the end of it, unless our resources are subject to purposive direction in accordance with planned priorities, and unless private consumption is subject to *some*—and it may have to be fairly severe—restraint. How is the State to enforce such a policy? It will be understandably unpopular, and its execution will be obstructed by disingenuous capitalist clamour for the removal of "bureaucratic controls" and by the inevitable recrudescence of advertising designed to stimulate consumers' appetites.

If the necessary controls are retained—a dubious assumption in the event of a Tory Government—consumption can be checked by restricting the supply of available goods in the shops and by prolonging (with appropriate modifications) a system of rationing and "Points." Taxation, direct or indirect, can also be maintained at a level calculated to restrain inessential private expenditure. Finally, the production of inessential goods for consumption can be limited by controlling and directing capital investment into essential, productive channels. It is questionable, however, whether these devices alone will suffice to ensure that an adequate proportion of our resources in labour and materials are directed into capital investment—houses and horse-power. If not, the gap must be filled by voluntary abstention from spending; and this raises the question whether we can rely for the purpose on a refashioned War Savings Movement carried over into peacetime.

We say "refashioned" because we gravely doubt whether the type of propaganda, over-simplified to the point of economic dishonesty, with which savings have been elicited in war conditions, could be effective in peace. Millions have been induced to become small investors in State loans by the appeal: "Give us your shillings and the soldier shall have a tank." By this time the public is beginning to realise that the money for the tank would have been forthcoming anyhow, even if the State had had simply to print it. What the man in the street has not been told by the Savings Movement, and may, therefore, not understand, is that if he had spent, instead of "saving," his shillings, there would have been longer queues for unrationed goods, much greater inflation of prices and a far greater diversion of national effort into the Black Market.

If people are to be persuaded after the war to restrict consumption in the short run in order that there may be greater welfare in the long run, the case for saving must be put frankly and honestly. No doubt the element of the picturesque is necessary in any popular appeal. There is no reason why local patriotism should not be invoked in inviting subscriptions to municipal loans for housing or other capital investment in this or that town, provided the project conforms to priorities in the national plan. It may be psychologically advisable to stimulate the flow of shillings, as was done in the U.S.S.R., by posters displaying projected hospitals or power-stations. But if it is to succeed, the post-war Savings campaign must eschew bunkum. Its argument must be not that savings are directly converted into houses (any more than they really were into tanks), but that if everybody spends his income to the limit on consumer goods, there will not be the labour or the materials available for the rehousing and industrial re-equipment on which a decent life for British citizens and full employment (bringing higher standards of consumption progressively within reach) ultimately depend.

So long as Property holds power in this country, there is little chance of the argument being correctly put, or of its carrying conviction in circumstances which the policies of the Right will create. In the eyes of Tory organisers, one of the benefits of a Savings Campaign is that it creates a mass of tiny rentiers who can be frightened by misleading talk of inflation when capital expenditure on housing and social improvements is suggested. If the British working classes are to be persuaded to postpone for a number of years the enjoyment of the many little comforts and pleasures sacrificed during the war, they will have to be convinced that controls and direction apply to all alike. In the course of the various Five Year Plans something like a quarter of the Russian national income was devoted to capital construction. In the case of Britain less heroic sacrifices would certainly suffice; but much disciplined abstention from luxuries there will have to be. Sections of the Tory press, notably Lord Beaverbrook's newspapers, are clamouring for a post-war world in which there are no controls and everyone can buy his fill of advertised goods. The test of the honesty of this week's Conservative Party Conference is whether the Tory leaders tell the rank and file the real price that must be paid for the social improvements with which the Young Tories hope to steal Labour's thunder.

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"WE MUST NOT LET LONDON DOWN"

[From a Correspondent]

A few weeks back we were handed out with our pay-packets the reprint of a pep-talk by Mr. Duncan Sandys; "We Must Not Let London Down," it was called. This had followed on a pretty little message of his which turned up at Christmas; and in between the two we'd had a short note, of would-be Churchillian eloquence, from the heads of the Federation of Building Trades Operatives. How excellent were the intentions implied in these addresses! But their language was of that unlucky kind which stirs, in any save the simplest of spirits, only ironic echoes. Perhaps the trade union leaders might have known better, but who shall blame the Minister of Works for not knowing the minds of working men? And, indeed, if the view of my mates is correct, that the Minister knows nothing about building, how should we harshly judge him for knowing no more about builders?

For about two months now I've been working in London with a provincial firm repairing bomb-damage. Like all, or nearly all, my companions, I had volunteered for the job; and, though we might be reluctant to say it in words, there was, I believe, a live idealism in our hearts. To make good, during the winter, shattered houses, so that dispossessed folk might find shelter in them—this was surely a worthy intention. And, true enough, shattered houses we were given to repair, a whole street of them, scarred and fractured and tumbled by the great blitz, the little blitz and the doodle-bugs.

A curious fact struck me, however, when I started work. The house I was sent to was void; its furniture was all gone; its inmates had long been living somewhere else. I asked questions, and was told that it had been empty since it was damaged in 1941. ("First damaged first mended," Mr. Sandys had said in January, 1945. "We have divided the job into two sections: the damage caused last summer, and the damage caused since then.") Still, this residence must be on record by now as a damaged house made good; it hasn't yet housed any people in need of shelter, but it's taken its place in a list. As a statistic it will surely placate, if they're reasonable, shelterless people who don't know where to go for a roof.

For it was done up all right, together with a number of other unoccupied houses that, like it, are still empty. No one can say that the work wasn't thorough. I've been told that different houses in the same street have been done up according to different standards. This, not having been long on the job, I can't answer for; but I took part in one most meticulous refurbishing. The foreman led me and another labourer into the garden of an empty house (he was acting under higher orders); "We've been told to get this garden cleared up," he said; "the owner's been round with a member of the borough council." Tree suckers, thick as bamboos, were all over the garden; and in between them were bricks and glass, blown there in 1941. We were to cut away the suckers and clear the rubbish out. Repairs on the structure of the house were complete.

"If normal methods are insufficient, then we must improvise. Nothing must stand in our way. We have received a call to arms." So, resoundingly, runs and echoes the clarion call of the union leaders. We improvised. Having no garden implements, we employed, for cutting down the suckers, our shovels and the axe-like head of a plasterer's hammer; we made quite a nice job of clearing up that garden.

Next morning we were sent to do first-aid repairs following an "incident." In some hundreds of houses the doors, windows, ceilings and roofs were badly blasted; and for a week we worked along a single street, putting things roughly to rights. Our feet and fingers froze in the snow and icy wind which came into the unprotected rooms, the rooms of workers and poor people. "This is an honest job," we found ourselves reprehensibly saying, as one after another those habitations became, under our hands, proof against the bitterest of the season. And so we worked our way along the scalped and blinded houses. After all, wasn't this what we'd come to London for?

I'll never forget that week. The outrageous wind, which once blew a ladder down that we were rearing; the pavements caked with trodden snow like an Alpine town in winter; the bonhommous, unselfconscious obscenities that we were gaily greeted with by the ladies of each sorry tenement; one shattered, dejected, amazed old woman being led by the hand into her blasted home. And cheerfulness in trouble that broke down all the ironic and cynical barriers in my spirit. "We've a lot to be thankful for" (snow falling through her empty window-frames and broken roof on to the dusty ceiling as it lay all over the floor); "this might have happened in that foggy weather just before Christmas." "Hitler can't kill us!" "There's an old couple on the top floor; see to their windows first; ours can wait." Honest work it was indeed, and what we'd come to London for.

The last job we had in that street was to knock down a dangerous ceiling and patch it up with plaster-board. We got among the rafters and chopped and hacked down through the laths till the dust filled our mouths and throats and nostrils with spittle black as ink. We'd cut out the boards and were nailing them up; three-quarters of the ceiling was done; the family was expecting to settle in again. ("It takes twenty years to make a home," they said to us, "and in two minutes it's gone.")

We were taken off. Back we were again, patching up empty houses. Another firm was put on to that fresh damage, so everything must have been according to schedule. What the schedule probably didn't reveal was that a change of hands must mean delay—delay while snow and cold winds could still come in with the light, in through broken roofs and empty windows. Still, it must all, no doubt, have looked perfectly good on paper.

We found, on our return, that the house where I'd cleared the garden out had a notice up, "For sale." The friend of the borough councillor must certainly have been satisfied.

Not long after we'd got back on to our routine job, we had evidence, incontrovertibly, that those in authority were conscientious and full of watchfulness. An order was passed on that all decorating must cease. What struck us as odd, though, was that the order should come through just as we were starting work, at last, on some *occupied* houses. It must, quite certainly, have been a coincidence; but I'm puzzled, I confess, as to why such an order should ever have become necessary. Our duty, we'd originally understood, was to make houses safe and weatherproof for immediate habitation: no more. Why had empty houses been so thoroughly done up—and left empty? There's a lot of other things that still puzzle me.

I hope it's wrong of my mates to keep on saying, as they do, "This is all a racket." (Only rarely do I let such unguarded words get past my own lips.) Before committing myself to so shocking an opinion, I should first, in fairness, have to hear the answers to a number of questions which keep on occurring to me.

Why, in our particular case, did we do up empty houses before some that are still being lived in? Are these empty houses to be taken over for those in need of a roof? And, if so, when? (For week after week now we've been able to see, going to and from work, empty houses in habitable condition.) Is it perhaps just a good old regular John Bull bungle? Who's to blame? It can't be our firm for taking on the contract any more than us for doing the job. Is it the fault of the Ministry for not laying down proper restrictions? Or, if sensible restrictions are supposed to be in force, are the local authorities going beyond them? And, if so, why?

But this last question opens up such horrid vistas that I have to turn my face away.

A LONDON DIARY

Among the world's great men none gives interviews so rarely as Stalin. I recall the long argument he had with H. G. Wells, that formed the basis of a pamphlet (published by this journal) in which Shaw and Keynes and Ernst Toller and others all took a hand. I recall, too, the famous Roy Howard interview, and the delightful account that Eugene Lyons gave of a talk with Stalin when he was changing his clothes and packing his bag—a genial picture which was difficult to reconcile with the horrific account that Lyons gave of Stalin's policies. From the Shaw-Astor-Lothian interview came many good stories. There is now another interview to add to the list. The Members of Parliament just back from Russia are properly reticent about their long conversation with Stalin, but they all report his injunction to them to tell the truth about Russia, "good and bad"—which is a good start for Anglo-Soviet relations after the war.

* * *

What the dickens is to happen at San Francisco? A vast caravanserai of Ministers, officials and journalists will be there; the small States will come armed with amendments and objections. But where are the vital principles on which the Conference will be focussed? There has been no time for proper preparation, and yet the idea seems to be that the representatives of governments, themselves often very unrepresentative, should produce a draft treaty to be presented for ratification by the U.S. Senate and by the Parliaments and publics of other countries without further world discussion. Among changes I hoped for was that the World Assembly should represent parliaments, not governments—though, of course, governments would in fact be in charge under such a scheme, since they would command the necessary parliamentary majorities. The British Labour Party favoured this proposal after the last war, but I gather that this time it has rejected it. In 1919 the League was launched in a fervour of popular idealism. This time there is no tide of enthusiasm; not because it is not potentially there, but because the ordinary man, deeply sceptical anyway, is given no picture of a new world scheme to hang on his wall. So far the thing only looks like a series of makeshifts and power compromises. If I were Mr. Eden, I would bid the rest of the world go to hell for a fortnight and, instead of spending it in settling crises as they arise, retire to make up my mind on a long perspective what creative idea can be given flesh at San Francisco if a great effort is made to rally world opinion around it.

* * *

I am always surprised how much feeling the question of war decorations arouses. One can sympathise with Mr. Churchill when he is badgered by M.P.s and other groups to add this or that class to those entitled to wear a certain badge or ribbon. Questions of precedence, of who shall wear what and when, are always knotty and sometimes futile. I remember that some time ago one daily paper devoted half a column on its front page to a lament that a distinguished Allied commander was unable to sport the Afric Star because he already had another decoration which took precedence. In any case, such awards are often a matter of chance. For every man who gets public recognition of his bravery there is sure to be at least one other who feels that he has been wrongly overlooked. I find myself sympathising with a correspondent who says:

> We are not children. To the majority of us wa is neither a sport nor a profession. We did no enter it in the glory of battle, nor to seek persona distinction in competitive feats of bravery. W have grown up beyond the time when we decorate our houses with the skulls and bones of our enemies can we not also forgo the rather childish pleasur of decking ourselves out in coloured ribbon and gol braid and displaying our honourable wounds lik a savage? War in this age is a sordid and shamef business whose guilt and indictment on the face humanity will not be obscured by all the buntin

in the world. In order to destroy an evil we find ourselves obliged to destroy much that is good and irreplaceable. The less we seek personal distinction in the discharge of an ugly duty the better we may appear in the eyes of a future generation, who will inherit the wreckage and will not be over concerned with the prowess with which we destroyed it.

The loss of millions of our best lives, not to mention the destruction of the memorials of a civilisation for which we were trustees, will not be redeemed by an equivalent tonnage of carved stone; nor will their memory be preserved in official formulae of regret and posthumous distinctions. We can redeem our loss only by our ability to achieve a world in which their children can hope for more than twenty years of threatened existence; by our creative courage in building something out of our ruins; and our proof that we meant more than to demonstrate who could destroy the most of his heritage in the shortest time.

I know quite a number of soldiers who have earned their decorations and felt like that.

* * *

The other day, C. E. M. Joad did a most effective broadcast appeal on behalf of a hospital. At least I thought it effective because Joad began with a statement that no such appeal ought nowadays to be made, since hospitals ought to be run by the State and not by private charity. He went on to point out that since this change-over would not be immediately carried out, we ought to give generously to the Southampton Hospital for Children. I recalled this when I received this week an appeal for money to complete the Annex of the Polytechnic in Regent Street, which will serve the very real needs of technical and commercial education and provide social amenities for young people returning from the Forces. Now the Education Act, much of which purports to come into force on April 1st of this year, provides ultimately for setting up just such institutions out of public funds. But as in the case of the hospital, I cannot on that account dismiss this appeal for the Polytechnic because it will certainly be some years before public bodies do the job. Where, on the other hand, a scheme for taking over the existing private institution and making it public already stands, all appeals for private help should, I suggest, be resisted. There are plenty of people hurrying to anticipate the Education Act by appealing for speedy private endowments so that private or church schools shall avoid taking their place within a really public school system.

* * *

Recently, I.C.I. have been presenting the public with advertisements of a rather new type. Let me take one example. Here is a photograph of a 62-year-old Scotsman, named Wilson, who began in the explosives department "at the tender age of eleven" and became "chairman of the largest explosive manufacturing organisation in the British Empire." Then note this passage:

> The first ten years after joining Mr. Wilson spent in learning various aspects of explosive manufacture, and there then ensued a period in which his knowledge, experience and skill were in demand abroad as much as at home. He made his first overseas journey in 1905 and since then has travelled to Japan, Manchuria, Germany, Austria, Spain, Rumania, Greece, Czechoslovakia and Canada. During this time he was responsible for building more than a score of explosive factories in Great Britain and in different parts of the world.

Clearly this is written in all innocence. It never occurs to I.C.I. that anyone will think it odd that the knowledge, skill and experience of their experts should have been available to those who wanted them abroad—in Japan, Manchuria and Germany, for instance—and that they should have started explosive factories in so many parts of the world.

* * *

An exhibition of paintings by a British soldier in Florence, British troops studying the mosaics (and plumbing) of an ancient Roman city in Tripolitania—such are further unexpected and pleasing instances of that new interest in art of which I spoke a fortnight ago. A Scottish artist called William Gear, serving with the Allied Armies, has had a one-man show in Florence, the subjects including ruined Cassino, the garden of the Villa Borghese, a head of a British soldier, and a Madonna described by my correspondent as "probably a critical comment on hundreds of Italian Madonnas seen on the way from Reggio to Florence." Those who heard Sir Leonard Woolley's wireless talk on "Works of art in the firing line" learnt of the invaluable activities of the Monuments and Fine Arts branch of the Army, which not only takes care of monuments but organises exhibitions. I have just seen an excellent leaflet prepared as a guide specially for British troops who can visit the ancient Roman city of Sabauda. Since those who join the Army often see so much of so interesting a world, the War Office deserves the heartiest congratulations on such efforts to make the experience enjoyable.

* * *

Strangely little public comment has been aroused by the Government's decision that Double British Summer Time is to operate, once but only once more, this year for a limited period, April 1st to July 15th; and that, on October 7th, we are to revert, as in pre-war days, to Greenwich Mean Time for the winter months, followed, presumably, by Summer Time next April. Probably few tears will be shed over the passing of D.B.S.T. No doubt it saved coal and facilitated needful overtime work in the docks and transport undertakings generally. But there was something a bit unnatural in eleven o'clock sunsets; and, quite apart from interference with the normal habits of cows, both children and adults were apt to sit up to an hour which resulted in real shortage of sleep in households containing workers. On the other hand, I should have thought that B.S.T.—except, perhaps, in December and January—had earned its place as an all-round-the-year institution. I know that farmers hate milking in the dark in autumn and early spring; but an immense majority of the population gained greatly from the extra hour of evening daylight. It is surprising that there have been no protests at the forthcoming loss of this boon in October–November and February–March.

CRITIC

THIS ENGLAND

A 5/- prize for the first entry in this column goes to Eric Tipper.

Paste entries on postcard or slip of paper and give details of origin. Address to THIS ENGLAND, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1.

Owner of tractor (on H.P.) wishes to correspond with Widow who owns a modern Foster Thrasher; object matrimony; send photograph of machine.—Advt. in *Lincolnshire Chronicle.*

NEW PLAY FOR MANCHESTER. John Gielgud will bring his Haymarket Theatre company to Manchester for the opening of "The Duchess of Malfi," a new play by John Webster.—*News Chronicle.*

Liquidator offers quantity brooches and buttons (residue of large order), symbolic of Britain and her Dominions; gilt and exquisitely enamelled Flag (encircling motto in blue enamel—"What we have we hold"); 100–500, 1*s.* 3*d.*, 1,000, 1*s.* each (50 per cent. below cost). Wonderful commemorative gift to workpeople.—Advt. in *The Times.*

Lady Montgomery, mother of the Field-marshal, has forecast that the war will be over on March 23rd, and she says she has written to the Field-Marshal to make sure that her forecast is fulfilled.—*Evening Standard.*

When an elderly woman was summoned in Leeds to-day for not keeping a dangerous dog under control, it was stated the animal got into an adjoining garden and was discovered worrying a pullet.

For the defence it was urged that the dog had been provoked, and that "the pullet put its tongue out, as it were."—*Yorkshire Evening Post.*

THE AMERICAN PRESS

[FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT IN THE U.S.]

"THE function of a newspaper is to print the news and raise hell," said a Chicago editor during the Civil War. It may rather surprise an English reader—sadly aware that his country lies athwart the transatlantic gulf stream of Eatanswillian denunciation—to find an editor lambasting the American press for not doing enough of either. But Oswald Garrison Villard specialises in the unexpected, and his latest attack on the American press, which he graced for so long, is a spirited attack on modern times. The American daily, he tells us, diseased by wealth and emasculated by respectability, is slowly dying out—Darwinianism in this case providing for the survival of the vulgarest.

The title of his book, *The Disappearing Daily,* is reminiscent of those earnest alarmists who shake their heads over the second law of thermodynamics. Though there are to-day 180 fewer dailies in the United States than 15 years ago, the impressive total of 1,754 still extant, and buttressed by 11,474 weeklies, suggests that their disappearance is well around the corner. A more grave complaint by the late editor of the *Nation* is not that dailies are disappearing, but that they are becoming indistinguishable one from another.

The mass production technique, which is America's most significant gift to the world, smothers "individualism" under "free enterprise." If the people demand a large paper covering all aspects of human perversity, they cannot expect to have a local paper. The cost of getting the news, let alone rewriting it, is far too great. In Britain most of the local press succumbed to the great London dailies. In America, distances made it physically impossible to transport newspapers speedily enough across the continent, so instead chain newspapers, agencies and feature services grew up.

Under this system the local editor provides little more than scissors, paste and a masthead. His front page consists of world news served up in a neatly digested form by the Associated Press. Regional news is provided by the local wire of a similar agency. From yet another agency come editorials, each carefully labelled: "Can Baseball Survive" (9 column inches); "Joys of Spring" (12 column inches); "Thoughts on Riding in a Taxi" (verse, 8 inches). Other enterprises provide photographs (war and pin-up), advice columns (legal, lovelorn and culinary), cartoons (humorous, patriotic, uplift and political), and so on. Finally, so that the local editor shall not be overworked by problems of selection, thoughtful journalists 2,000 miles away will even provide complete pages already made up.

The ever-spreading power of national columnists is cited as another sign that the local influence of the press is steadily declining. Mr. Villard deplores this because it stops the local editor from making up his mind on vital problems of the day. But this is a very partial view of the situation. Syndicated columns may not be pillars of wisdom, but many of them at least provide thoughtful comment on complex matters by journalists who have time to study them. There must be few communities—or editors—which are worse off because they read Walter Lippman or Dorothy Thompson on the affairs of Europe, rather than their local pundit who will probably fulminate against "Poland and the other Balkan States" and will certainly be unable to distinguish between Aneurin Bevan and Ernest Bevin. It is, moreover, doubtful whether any editor will refrain from comment merely because The Columnist Has Spoken. When he does refrain, it must be admitted, it is a real loss; for all America west of the Alleghanies distrusts the pronouncements, official and unofficial, of Washington. It trusts its village Hampden all the more because he does not visit the capital and is not therefore corrupted by contact with "them clever folks down east."

Nevertheless, in a shrinking world, distance is a less serious ground than wealth for the divorce of the press from the people. Mr. Villard's attack on the press as a branch of Big Business seems cogent, and very pertinent to an English reader. The *Chicago Daily News,* with a circulation of well under half a million, cost its recent purchaser about 3 million dollars. The *Chicago Sun,* with a circulation of about 300,000, is said to have cost its founder about 2 million dollars in its first year of publication.

The effect on the press of existence in this rarefied atmosphere of high finance is two-fold. First, it seems that newspaper proprietors are almost always on the monied and conservative side of the fence. About 75 per cent. of the press opposed Mr. Roosevelt's re-election in 1936, 1940 and 1944, and an even greater percentage opposed the social legislation of the New Deal. Secondly, the enormous capital of a newspaper must earn interest, and the size of the investment increases the relative power of the money-making departments of the paper. That is why the newspapers—in both England and America—are to-day dominated by their publishers, not their editors. Mr. William Randolph Hearst was once the most powerful newspaper figure in America, but, according to one of his own editorial writers, "He could not write an advertisement for a lost dog." Thus at last we are come to the publication by illiterates for illiterates of what might be called illiterature.

In a rather more old-fashioned way Mr. Villard still sees government as the main threat to the freedom of the press. Charles I, with that directness of approach which characterised his times, cut off Mr. Prynne's ears for publishing something the king disliked. To-day an offended government simply plugs the keyhole, leaving the ear of the offending journalist unscathed but useless, and his paper with no legitimate complaint. The Government's control of "leaks" is one of its most powerful and least controllable weapons against the press. A correspondent who has won the favour of an administration will receive all sorts of "inside" information, even an outline of what is the Presidential Great Design for the new and better world. He will work hard to keep that favour, and neither he nor his publisher will lightly cut off such a source by criticism of the administration.

That Mr. Roosevelt and the Secretary of State cannot plug the leak to Drew Pearson, who gaily prints direct transcriptions of cipher cables, is only another sign of how commercialised and ingrained this type of double dealing has become. Very properly Mr. Villard asks why it is necessary that we should tolerate the double standard of ethics involved in "off the record" statements, and "for your ears only" leaks, which are one of the main sources of information about governmental acts in peace as in war. Americans are realising more and more clearly the merits of having the head of the government questioned publicly by the representatives of the people rather than privately and unpreparedly by the representatives of the press.

The basic argument of *The Disappearing Daily* is not, however, that the press is losing its freedom, or losing its circulation—which reached a record in 1944—but that it is losing its influence with the people. Mr. Villard makes particular play of the fact that in recent Presidential elections the press has been 75 per cent. against Roosevelt, while the people have been about 55 per cent. for him. We might ask several questions of this statement: Was the press so much more influential when it elected its candidate Mr. Hoover? How is it the press does seem to influence local, as opposed to national, election results? But the real question is this: Can the influence of the press be measured by its impact on election returns?

The author himself would clearly answer that the newspapers are no longer bought for their political news alone; "the readers want their comics, they want their sports, they want news of Hollywood, and they want news of our steady progress in the war." Readership surveys show that far fewer people read the editorials than read the comics, or the women's pages. The newspaper, perhaps under the influence of the radio, must now be judged as an instrument of entertainment rather than enlightenment. Its purpose has become to tell the people less and less about more and more. So when we say that a particularly vicious editorial will go into a million homes, we can comfort ourselves that it will probably only reach 100,000 minds.

It is of course possible to regard the features, the women's pages, the comics and doodahs of a paper as the bait which conceals the hook of editorial content. If that is so, how cheering to reflect that, since the people vote against the papers, so many readers can swallow the bait and spit out the hook. The American reader is quite as shrewd as his newspaper on matters where he can view the situation for himself; but he is far more easily misled in news from abroad, where he has no means of checking the views that are handed down from his publisher. Can the American reader feel certain that none of the biasing of news which takes place on domestic matters ever taints his foreign news?

EXAGGERATION

When one reads that Mr. Pickthorn says that "the importance of education tends to be over-estimated, especially by the people in the trade," one feels for a moment—or, at least for what is nowadays called a split second—that the representatives of a great university ought not to say such things. After all, there are plenty of people who under-estimate the importance of education, and one does not like to see them encouraged by pronouncements from seats of learning. Second thoughts, however, suggest that, if the object of universities is to encourage the quest of the good, the beautiful, and the true, university members should not be forbidden to speak the truth; and it is undeniable that Mr. Pickthorn spoke the truth. If the early advocates of universal and compulsory education had foreseen what a compulsorily educated world would be like in our time, they would, I am sure, have been disappointed and even incredulous. They could scarcely have believed that in an educated country theft would become so common that on the four great English railway lines alone, goods to the value of £1,758,250 would disappear in the first nine months of 1944. And this is only a drop in the tidal wave of stealing that has swept over civilised countries in recent years. Sparta, where the child learnt stealing at its mother's knee, would have envied us for living in such a prig's paradise.

There have been philosophers who attributed most of the errors of mankind to lack of knowledge and who held the noble belief that if human beings were educated they would also be virtuous. They seem to have been mistaken. A knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic has helped many a man to become a forger who, if he had remained illiterate, would also have remained innocent. As a student of chemistry, Major Armstrong was doubtless well qualified to cure his patients, but he was equally well qualified to poison his wife. Jack the Ripper is believed by some people to have had a surgeon's knowledge of the science of anatomy. But it is not only a scientific education that has failed to make human beings inevitably virtuous. Benvenuto Cellini is generally accepted as a master of the arts, but he was less than a saint in spite of this. Wainewright was admirably equipped with artistic and literary knowledge, but he is memorable chiefly for his crimes. Richard III and Henry VIII were both men with, probably, a B.A. standard of culture. Even proficiency in theology has never been a sure prophylactic against breaches of the Ten Commandments. Was not Titus Oates, in his time, a Baptist minister, a curate and a chaplain in the Navy?

Even while we admit the frequent failures of education to produce the best type of human being, however, most of us continue to believe like our schoolmasters that education is a pretty good thing. I have met men who said that universal education does more harm than good, but I have never met a man who professed to be sorry that he himself had been taught to read and write. Sometimes in the cottages of illiterate old country people, who must now be a very small and disappearing minority, even in the remote parts of Ireland, I have wondered whether they were not as happy and as intelligent as if they had spent the noons of their childhood in schoolhouses, but then they were educated in a sense in which even the illiterate townsman is never educated; they were educated in a great tradition of song and story and learned from conversation many things that others learned only from books.

Happy illiteracy of this kind cannot flourish, however, in great industrial towns and cities. Here there is no oral culture handed down through the generations. I doubt whether even the most romantic idealist dreams longingly of a London of the future in which the majority of the inhabitants will be unable to read or write. Illiteracy in towns is a prison, and school at least provided a key—sometimes a fragile key—to open the door of the prison. When one thinks of the pleasures of freedom that one has enjoyed as a result of once being taught to read "The ca sat on the mat," one wonders whether it is posible to over-estimate the importance of education; whether one's bent is towards Shakespeare or the sciences, it is largely through books that one enters into possession of the freedom of the created world, even while incarcerated in a bed-sitting-room in the ugliest suburb in London. "Angels alone that soar above enjoy such liberty." It may be retorted that comparatively few people read any books worth reading after their school-days, and that all that our schoolmasters have done for most of us has been to teach us to spell rubbish. I do not think this is a black mark against education, however. The schools at least set up signposts for us pointing to the mountains and oceans of literature. They can help us to reach these, but they cannot force us there. It is possible, indeed, that many people are born incapable of reading great poetry with pleasure just as many people are born incapable of listening to great music with pleasure.

Schoolmasters and professors of genius ca undoubtedly stimulate the appetite for literature or science; but there will always be recalcitrants in every class, some with an antipathy to poetry, others with an antipathy to mathematics. Dislike of such things is as natural in some human beings as dislike of fat or of parsnips. Professor Hogbe may have made mathematics palatable to th million, but after the first easy stages even h could never have made them palatable to me. And, indeed, I should not like an educationa system which could teach every subject with equa success to everybody. It is better that some boy should be bored by algebra and enjoy Latin. I is better that others should be bored by Lati and enjoy algebra. Besides, one is seldom entirel bored in class. At worst one is merely mystified

Let not the schoolmasters, then, be discourage by the lack of great results that has followed s much of their instruction. Let them continu with unabated enthusiasm to over-estimate th importance of their task. The man who does n over-estimate the importance of his job is unlike to make a first-rate success of it. The reason wh Arthur Balfour was so inefficient a Prime Ministe was that he failed so languidly to over-estima the importance of politics. Gladstone committe no such error. According to his critics, he ove estimated the importance of Home Rule; b suppose he had not done so—suppose he ha half-heartedly told his audiences up and dow the country, "I don't want you to get a wro idea about the importance of this measure. may, and I hope it will, do some good, but d not expect too much from it. The results Acts of Parliament are usually disappointing"— who can believe that he would have rouse hundreds of thousands of English working m to forget their own selfish interests in a strugg for freedom of a neighbouring island that few them had ever even visited? If I were Prime Minister, I would not allow any man who was not foolish enough to over-estimate the importance of politics a seat in my Cabinet.

Good poets, again, like good statesmen, are apt to over-estimate the importance of their trade. Aeschylus, it is true, is said to have wished to be remembered as a man who fought at Marathon rather than as a great poet; but I suspect there was an element of play-acting in this. Most poets seem to believe that such demigods are they that, were it not for them, the fame even of the greatest men would not survive. Divinely inspired, they are the sole conferrers of immortality. So at least that excellent poet, Dr. Oliver Gogarty, suggests in his poem celebrating the "blithe hexameters" of Homer. This, of course, is all nonsense. From Moses to Socrates and from Hannibal to Abraham Lincoln, most of the great men have been immortalised, not in poetry, but in prose. Still, it is a good thing that the poet, whose importance is probably under-estimated by the vast majority of the human race, should go to the other extreme and make extravagant claims for himself, like many another honest advertiser.

Even in sport it is an essential of success to over-estimate the importance of one's occupation. Mr. A. P. Herbert, in a skit on Chehov, once invented a goalkeeper who kept soliloquising during a match in some such fashion as: "What does it matter who wins?" "What's the use of all this?" "It doesn't matter a straw whether they score a goal or not." From a lofty point of view it is possible, I admit, to argue that the importance of games is over-estimated in the modern world. But the truth is that only those who over-estimate the importance of games can play them well. If Grace had taken a saner view of the importance of cricket he would have remained all his life an obscure provincial doctor.

A philosopher once said something like: "One should realise how infinitesimal is the importance of the best that one can do, and how infinitely important it is that one should do it." This is true in a way both of the poet and of the policeman, both of the bishop and of the rowing blue. It is also true, however, that, except for occasional moments, it is better not to realise too keenly how infinitesimal is the importance of our trade and our work for it. I should prefer seeing schoolmasters with swelled heads to seeing them too self-depreciatory. The fact is, the importance of over-estimating the importance of education cannot be over-estimated. There is no other way of making education good enough for its importance to be worth over-estimating. Y. Y.

RADIO NOTES

When Edmond Rostand's reputation was at its height, his position was even more delirious than that of a present-day film star. There is a story that one day, when he was lunching at a Paris restaurant with some friends, he inadvertently burnt a hole in the tablecloth with his cigar. Rostand was anxious: "What shall I do about paying for this?" "Don't worry," said one of his friends; "just sign the hole." But the fame that could buy anything with an autograph—fame that in itself has a certain *panache*, like that of Cyrano himself—that fame quickly slumped, and efforts to revive it have not had much success. Even at its height the more acute critics (including Tolstoy) perceived how phoney, how synthetic Rostand's art was. His verse has gathered all the moss of the nineteenth century, from the early experiments of Vigny and Hugo to those of Leconte de Lisle; but it is no good—in Rostand's hands the Alexandrine seldom has even the rolling eloquence of Hugo, and never approaches the majesty of Corneille—the master to whom, in spirit, Rostand is nearest. But he had one great virtue, as a dramatist: he knew how to construct a fat part for a great actor—*La Princesse Lointaine* for Sarah Bernhardt, Cyrano for Coquelin. There are some full-length cadenzas in *Cyrano de Bergerac*, but the trouble about them—as about the whole play—is that the quality is too thin and gawdy to withstand the glare of translation. The late Humbert Wolfe's version is neatly done, but it gives the whole show away; we might have been listening to something by Stephen Phillips. Any criticism of the acting would be unfair, in the circumstances. This play makes bad radio: I doubt if anyone ignorant of the text could have followed the sequence of events!

Stephen Potter's programme on how *Robinson Crusoe* was written, though it may have seemed tame after the epic thrills of the *Harbour called Mulberry*, was a good example of literary feature. It was pure radio stuff, and it had some subtle points other producers would do well to note. When Defoe was hustled into the pillory, one expected crowd noises. But no: a single female voice described the scene, in a cave of silence. That was an imaginative use of the medium. So was the abstention from music until the moment when Crusoe came upon Friday's footmark; if we had had a conventional outburst of violins earlier in the programme, this sequence would have been immeasurably less effective than it was. At the same time, it is no use pretending that this feature made easy listening; Stephen Potter's touch is often so deceptively light that one is apt to forget the scholarship which is the background of nearly all his programmes. In other words, you have to listen—and listen all the time. Dash away to answer the telephone and you may not be able to catch up again, for the threads in a critical broadcast of this kind are many and fine; but the tissue of stimulating ideas is well worth acquiring. How many of us had thought of Crusoe as a typical Englishman of the type which has lately made Commando officers? It is truths like this which send us back to the great books we neglect. And that, I take it, is the object of these programmes.

RECOMMENDATIONS:—

March 18. Recital by Oda Slobodskaya: Songs by Purcell, Rossi, Roussel, Chausson, etc. (2.30).

March 19. Spanish Zarzuela Music, introduced Roberto Gerhard (3.0). French Orchestral Music (G.F.P., 4.35). Book Talk by Compton Mackenzie (6.30). "South with Shackleton" (9.30).

March 20. Francis Meynell on Alice Meynell (10.40 p.m.).

March 21. Symphony Concert: Brahms Violin Concerto (Ginette Neveu) (7.15).

March 23. "La Bonne Chanson": Song-cycle (Verlaine), Pierre Bernac and Francis Poulenc (8.0). Professional Portrait: The Gillie (8.30). The Arts: Charles Marriott and Michael Ayrton (10.30).

EDWARD SACKVILLE WEST

PICTURES TO NOTICE

The Arcade Gallery offers a rewarding assembly of portraits. Cranach provides a panel of a Saxon prince who looks very German and nasty, Corneille de Lyon a circular portrait of a gentleman who looks very French and delightful. A group of boys' heads by an unknown Italian from Venice or Parma is a most beautifully painted work; so are the delicate unfinished Reynolds and a woman's head by an obscure Dutchman called Schalcken. The Tintoretto and the Bronzino are feeble, but Zoffany is here much more powerful than usual; Opie dazzles, Couture charms, and there is a grand little picture by a Dutchman called Pot. The catalogue contains an interesting introduction.

The New English Art Club exhibition at Burlington House includes a retrospective section, which excites painful comparisons with the work of living members. Sickert, Whistler, Conder, Wilson Steer, Spencer Gore, the too much forgotten Mark Fisher, McEvoy, Innes, Fred Brown, the early Sargent and Brabazon are all represented by fine pieces of painting. Indeed refinement, alike in feeling and treatment, seems now the most outstanding quality of these painters whose foreign ways once seemed so disturbing. One cannot overestimate the service they perform in civilising English art after a Dark Age. It is a pleasure to see among the contemporary exhibitors an excellent work by D. S. MacColl, who played so signal a part in the early history of the Club. The Beaux Arts Gallery also is now showing some work by the Club's founders,—note too the Nicholson.

At the Redfern, one room is devoted to paintings by Fred Uhlman, who continues to widen and deepen his scope. Among the best works in the new show are *The Estuary*, *Wales*, *The Skaters*, and *Studio I*. While his subjects reveal unusual imagination, his work, like Paul Klee's, is conspicuous for its painterly virtues. It is a pleasure to praise an artist who makes the best of two worlds that are now so frequently kept separate. In the next room are pictures by Masson, Borès, Max Jacob, and other Parisians.

ROGER MARVELL

THE MOVIES

"To-night and Every Night," at the New Gallery
"And Now To-morrow," at the Plaza
"Moscow Skies," at the Tatler

How much one misses by being critical! Enjoyment, last week, of Cocteau has been punished by an avalanche of slush. Incipient Spring, I suppose, has unearthed them, the singies and the teasies and the sloppies that shoot up whichever way one turns. On one side of Leicester Square Miss Durbin sings to millions, but not, alas, to me; her charm vanished, Springs ago, in a build-up as elaborate as a three-tiered wedding cake. Not a hundred yards away Miss Carmen Miranda sings and dances: Primavera herself for some, but again not—no, emphatically not—for me. Then what about the trifle at the New Gallery, about the brave little theatre that kept open through the Blitz? Hollywood is rather fond of its Blitz; it knows two periods in London; the other conjures up the fogs and frills of the Nineties. Very melodious the siren seems during its rare intrusions on the more or less hot numbers of *To-night and Every Night*; and the crashed pub in technicolor might be a background for Miss Miranda, but certainly not for Londoners in 1940. Little attempt has been made at authenticity. The Windmill has a stage the size of Olympia; Miss Rita Hayworth and the other girls look like front covers of American magazines, and the tap dancer down from Manchester obviously travels via New York. As a concession, since the uniform is R.A.F., the hero has a David-Nivenish look. "It would make you laugh," says the old door-keeper, "if it didn't make you cry."

And Now To-morrow is a grade higher, but that's not saying very much. Miss Loretta Young, after an attack of meningitis, is as deaf as a door-post, lip-reads wonderfully, but misses one or two things going on behind her back. For example, her fiancé is having an affair with her younger sister. But of course he will go through with the engagement because, poor dear, she can't hear a thing. Then Mr. Alan Ladd gets to work on her. He has been experimenting on rabbits for a cure for deafness, and in the end finds one for her, which restores her hearing after a single injection of serum. Remarkable discovery! Perhaps in his next film this handsome young doctor will apply his genius to cataract, cancer and infantile paralysis. Mr. Ladd's real cure for his patients, though, is older-fashioned; he tortures them with his good looks and bad manners for seven reels, and kisses them in the eighth.

And so back to the war which still, despite repetitions, proves a better spur to film-making than sex. *Moscow Skies* (director, Julius Reisman) falls short of the Russian war documentaries, but its story keeps an authenticity which, after the *To-nights* and *To-morrows*, is invigorating. These adventures of a young pilot, fresh from training, who plays a heroic part in the Red Air Force's defence of Moscow, provide a parallel to the Battle of Britain. At the crisis every plane, including an old Seagull, must be kept in the air; the fighters come down only for more ammunition or refuelling. We watch one fighter approach a German bomber sideways from the rear and with its propellor saw off the adversary's tail: true to fact, but unconvincing here. Lieut. Streltsov (Peter Aleinikov) eventually crashes in the front line. There is a remarkable sequence in which he wanders about a stricken no man's land: the stiffly extended hands of the dead, the churned unrecognisable landscape, the burning tanks, the occasional passage of mechanised infantry, give a more forcible picture of the modern battlefield than any I have seen.

WILLIAM WHITEBAIT

PLAYS AND PICTURES

"The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles." Arts Theatre Club

This play, now satisfactorily produced in London for the first time, follows the familiar pattern of Shaw's later political fantasies. We begin with light entertainment salted with political jesting. Somewhere in the middle—the turning point is heralded by the dramatic entry of an angel to announce the arrival of Judgment Day—the jesting turns into very serious social sermonising. The Day of Judgment is not the end of the world, but the end of ideas and institutions and people who cannot adjust themselves to the world's needs. Love, pride, power, and empire (represented by a singularly beautiful chorus of soulless dolls) turn Fascist and are swept away, leaving us to brood on the mistake of worshipping false gods and seeking security. We are bidden to prepare for the Life Force's next dangerous adventure.

BLACK MARKET

After Rudyard Kipling

We've lost our pre-war markets overseas,
Great Britain is in everybody's debt,
We used to serve the Dagoes and Chinese,
Now there's cut-throat competition to be met.
We've got to find new fields for "British Made,"
New customers whose needs are manifold,
We're out to get the Fuzzy Wuzzies' trade,
For Fuzzy pays in ivory and gold.

So here's to you, Fuzzy Wuzzy
For your custom is essential,
And you don't possess an atom
Of industrial potential.
Your trade would be a godsend
To the British business man—
He'll be calling, Fuzzy Wuzzy,
With a business caravan.

The Fuzzy Wuzzy field is virgin soil,
His trade can start a healthy export flow;
The Fuzzy Wuzzies neither spin nor toil,
And their total productivity is low.
Tinned foods they will be ready to consume,
We can sell them a prefabricated thatch;
Their need for Frigidaires will start a boom,
And in clothes the Fuzzy Wuzzy starts from scratch.
So here's to you, Fuzzy Wuzzy,
Your requirements are abundant,
You will pay for high-grade exports
Which are elsewhere quite redundant.
And after we have served you
We have only one request—
Tell other Fuzzy Wuzzies
That British goods are best.

SAGITTARIUS

Correspondence

INSIDE THE ASYLUM

[We have received a number of letters from voluntary patients confirming the experience of the author of "Inside the Asylum." We print this week letters from a doctor and a nurse.]

SIR,—Unfortunately the picture presented in your columns entitled "Inside the Asylum" may be true of a great number of mental hospitals in this country. The reasons are not far to seek. Medical science has advanced a great deal in the last ten years in the treatment of mental illness, but unfortunately construction of buildings, legal procedure and education of doctors and mental nurses have lagged behind.

Many mental hospitals are built in such a way that proper segregation of cases is virtually impossible; that is to say that the buildings and overcrowding only allow for one admission ward in which patients of *all* kinds are placed for many weeks, there being no ward for relatively mild cases of early breakdown and psychoneurosis. With modern treatment and adequate and intelligent sorting there should be no need for any patient admitted for the first time to a mental hospital to mix with anyone with a poor prognosis.

Until recently the whole outlook has been custodial instead of curative, and therefore attendants were indeed warders and not nurses; everything, too, was for cheapness—the buildings were constructed with inadequate sanitation, and during wartime, with the degree of overcrowding that exists, these physical conditions cannot be altered.

The outlook of the staff in some hospitals has changed; in others it will inevitably have to change as more and more voluntary patients are admitted to be *cured* of their illness, rather than, as in former times, being taken to hospital when they were so ill that they had to be shut away till they either spontaneously recovered or became chronic inmates.

Again, as to the question of staff, it has not been generally recognised that mental nursing requires a real vocation and should not be taken up, as so frequently at present, because of short hours and good pay. This is especially true of the male nurse, who is recruited for the most part from the Army or coal mines—occupations which in no way fit them for the care of mental patients. Gradually it is dawning upon those in charge of mental hospitals that even the acutely disturbed male patients are better when looked after by a female nurse. But on the female side all is not what might be desired, for quite young girls are nursing acutely ill mental patients, which, to my mind, is neither good for the young girl nor for the patient. But these conditions may be improved when the wartime shortage of staff is not so acute and mental nursing has a chance of being recognised as requiring specialised knowledge rather than being the Cinderella of the nursing profession, often attracting those who are not specially competent or fitted for any other work.

It is these facts which make possible the condition described in your article.

Mental work has, until recently, been the stepchild of medicine, but now it is gradually coming into its own, and conditions in mental hospitals will, I am convinced, improve. In many hospitals there is already great improvement—there is adequate separation of cases, great stress is laid on occupational therapy, and in some hospitals the patients are running their own social club very successfully.

So much can conditions be changed that many patients in such a type of hospital find it difficult to leave. Where life has been a hard taskmaster, now for the first time they have individual care given them and a happy social life—gramophone recitals, hikes, dances, cards, etc.—and they dread going back to a life outside the hospital where, with the dearth of community centres, adult social life for the average working-class man and woman is so hard to get. Interests and a new outlook have been given, which unfortunately cannot be satisfied in their daily lives at home.

A PSYCHIATRIST IN A MENTAL HOSPITAL.

SIR,—I was interested in A. B. C.'s experiences inside an asylum appearing in last week's issue, and I can endorse much of what he says. I have worked as a nurse in county and private mental hospitals and seen something of the treatment that he describes. To put voluntary patients into the same ward as certified ones is both inhuman and therapeutically absurd. Those suffering from depression and anxiety are scarcely likely to feel restored by such surroundings.

With regard to the nurses and attendants, if a number of them are unsuited to the work, I suggest that this is largely because hospital conditions are generally so unattractive that it makes little appeal to the type of girl or young man who would be genuinely interested in mental cases.

The status of the profession badly needs raising if those who would be of most value in the tremendous fight against mental disease are to be drawn into it. The hours should be shorter (thirteen hours a day on the wards is too long for anyone), the salaries increased, the standard of living improved (the food is invariably appalling and the rooms uncomfortable), and the bar to marriage abolished. (A sister has been known to have an illegitimate child and not be demoted to staff nurse, but she may not take a husband and maintain her position.) The nurses should be trained to understand more fully the psychological aspects of the cases and to work in closer co-operation with the doctors. It would, in addition, be quite possible to give suitable applicants from amongst them the opportunity to become lay psychotherapists or occupational therapists. A shortened course in occupational work is quite adequate for dealing with mental cases, and it has such beneficial results that it is indefensible to leave patients in the boredom and melancholy that A. B. C. describes—and I have also seen.

Even under peacetime conditions, doctors in the big hospitals seldom have enough time for all the psychotherapy really needed. Such work can, like psychoanalysis, be undertaken by laymen after suitable training, working in conjunction with the medical psychiatrists.

There are, of course, a number of devoted nurses to be found in mental hospitals. I think, however, that only when these institutions are run in such a way that the individual needs of each patient are given greater priority will it be true to say that everything possible is being done for these most tragic and helpless people.

E. O. C.

PRICE CONTROL OF HOUSES

SIR,—On February 13th the Government announced its intention of appointing a committee to conside the advisability and practicability of controlling th prices of houses. Three and a half weeks later th names of the committee have been announced, bu the Government's leisurely approach to the problem holds out little hope of legislation before the Genera Election.

At the present time a vicious circle is operating, and it is neither helpful nor fair to put the blame on individuals. Housing accommodation has a tremendou scarcity value, but rents are very properly controlled under the Rent Restriction Acts. It follows tha when a house falls vacant it almost invariably pays th owner better to sell at the present inflated prices rathe than to let at the controlled rent. Therefore house to rent are practically non-existent, and many peopl who are driven hard to find houses to live in, bu where they would normally rent, and are forced t buy at crippling prices. In many residential district prices of houses—and particularly the smaller house —are already much more than double the pre-wa figure.

I hope nobody will believe the specious plea tha price control would be too difficult: if the Government were in earnest about it it would find it considerably easier than, say, the problem of controllin furniture prices.

My own suggestions are briefly these :—

(1) Fix the maximum price of houses at 33⅓ per cen above pre-war (both because this approximates roughl to the general fall in money values and because it ma be hoped that with drastic control of the buildin industry and its subsidiaries, costs of new houses wi sink to about that level, thus equating the prices o new houses with pre-war houses).

(2) The pre-war value could be assessed at

(*a*) The price at which the house was last sol during the ten years prior to September 1s 1939, or

(*b*) The District Valuer's valuation of the house o (say) March 1st, 1939,

whichever were the higher. (The District Valuer constantly valuing houses for Probate, and shoul have all the facts on which to make a fair valuation

(3) To prevent, as far as practicable, injustice those who have already been forced to buy at inflate prices there could be a proviso that, notwithstandin (1) and (2) above, a purchaser of a house betwee September 1st, 1939, and the date of the introductio of the Bill for Price Control (*not* the passing of th Act) would be entitled to resell at a price not exceedin the amount paid by him—if he were able to recov such a price in competition with the controlled pric of other houses.

(4) Any amount paid by a purchaser in excess the maximum price would be recoverable by actio within two years, just as rent in excess of the Re Restriction Act limits can be recovered in the Coun Courts at the present time.

(5) To prevent evasion there would have to be

stipulation that fixtures, fittings and furniture bought in connection with the purchase of a house must not exceed say 5 per cent. of the purchase price unless paid for at a valuation price fixed by an independent and competent valuer.

There are various technical points which would have to be taken into account; but I trust the above might be the outline of a workable scheme.

ERIC N. NEAVE

Thanet House,
231 Strand, London.

CHINA'S NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

SIR,—In recent weeks two correspondents (Mr. Sidney Bailey and Professor Chen Yuan) have referred in your columns to the New Year statement of Chiang Kai-shek promising constitutional government for China this year, and to the amplification of that statement by P. H. Chang, a Chinese Government spokesman.

Your correspondents, however, failed to refer to the most significant part of Dr. Chang's statement, namely, that of the 1,200 delegates to the National People's Assembly no less than 950 delegates had already been "elected" before the war.

Since Chiang Kai-shek, speaking on behalf of the Kuomintang, announced last week that this National Assembly would be called, subject to approval at the July Party Congress, for this November, it is of great interest to all who desire a democratic China to subject the composition of the Assembly to scrutiny.

Before the Japanese attack on China it was the intention of the Kuomintang to call a National Assembly in 1937. Regulations governing the choice of delegates were promulgated in May, 1936, and slightly revised in April, 1937. The 950 delegates referred to by Dr. Chang were chosen under these regulations.

These provided for 665 delegates to be selected on a regional basis under the supervision of the local party officials of the Kuomintang (these local officials themselves being centrally appointed), and for 380 to be chosen by professional and trade organisations. Dr. Chang stated that these two categories provide 868 of the already chosen members of the Assembly.

In addition the regulations provided for the special choice of members to represent Manchuria, Mongolia, etc., and for all the members of the Kuomintang Central Executive and Supervisory Committees (then totalling 241) to be *ex-officio* members.

Even if the delegates had been democratically elected in 1936-7 would they be any more likely to reflect the wishes of the Chinese to-day than our present Commons does our modern wishes?

When it is remembered that in China in 1936 civil war was still being waged, Wang Ching-wei was still a power in the Kuomintang, and one-party dictatorship was so fiercely enforced as to make even membership of the Anti-Japanese National Salvation Associations a matter for imprisonment, one can see how far from democratic would be an assembly composed of men carefully selected in 1936-7 for their lack of democratic opinions.

A National Assembly this year could lead to great advances in China, and Liberals and Communists have suggested ways in which such an Assembly could be democratically called; but the gathering of the yes-men of 1936 is not among them.

ARTHUR D. CLEGG

53, Springfield Road, N.W.8.

TRUTH AND THE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS QUESTION

SIR,—Your readers may be interested and surprised to know of a dispute over the Catholic Schools Question between the late Cardinal Hinsley, the present Archbishop of Westminster, and others on the one side and myself on the other. Until last November I was Professor of Canon Law at St. Edmund's College, Ware, the Roman Catholic ecclesiastical seminary for the arch-diocese of Westminster; and I had occupied that post for twenty-three years.

The dispute arose out of what I suspected to be our (Roman Catholic) dishonest propaganda in the education campaign of 1942 and 1943. Our pretence was that Catholicism was out for the right of all parents, non-Catholic as well as Catholic, to educate their children according to their conscience. I called this the doctrine of "parental rights all round"; and, though I wished it were Catholic, I suspected that it was not and that the public was being deceived. Hence I asked in the *Catholic Herald*: "From the Catholic point of view, does the argument from parental rights continue to hold even when the parents are in religious error and wish their children to be taught this error?" The late Cardinal Hinsley then wrote to me privately telling me that I was an "agent of confusion," etc., etc., and formally asked me to desist from the controversy.

I desisted as requested, because I did not wish to be thrown out of the Church on the spot. I wanted some time to think over the matter. I put the correspondence aside and gave myself two years to think about it. To the late Cardinal I wrote that, while I always had known that Catholics must accept the Faith, it was a painful surprise to me to learn that they might not now even ask what the Faith was. The Cardinal replied that this was "a silly piece of nonsense." All this occurred in January, 1943.

During the summer of 1944 I mentioned the matter to Mr. Arnold Lunn, who took up the cudgels for the Cardinal. Mr. Christopher Hollis and Canon Mahoney of St. Edmund's College, Ware, also entered the lists on the Cardinal's side. Mr. Lunn brought the present Archbishop of Westminster into the discussion by protesting to him against my methods.

Ultimately, in the case of Canon Mahoney, Mr. Hollis and the Archbishop himself, the defence narrowed down to the position that, while they did not deny or dispute the fact that I was right on the point of doctrine, they considered that I had no right as a priest to maintain the truth (as I wished to do by publishing the documents relating to the case) against the authority of the Archbishop (who opposed publication). Canon Mahoney, if I have understood him rightly, actually put this position in writing.

Last September I sent this letter of Canon Mahoney's to the Archbishop and asked whether he would repudiate it at least in the sense in which I understood it, since, if it was Catholic doctrine that a priest had no right to maintain truth against the authority of his bishop, I had been wrong all my life about the nature of Catholicism. The Archbishop chose to remain silent, though he must have known that his silence on such a point placed me in a very difficult position.

Now recently I mentioned Canon Mahoney's letter to Mr. Lunn, who angrily replied that he did not believe my account of it to be true. The doctrine which I, rightly or wrongly, attributed to Canon Mahoney, Mr. Lunn rejected, I suspect quite rightly, as heretical. I replied that all I had asked the Archbishop to do in September was to repudiate for the sake of my peace of mind, what I, correctly or not, understood to be Canon Mahoney's doctrine —thus leaving it an open question whether or not I had understood Canon Mahoney rightly. Yet the Archbishop had remained silent. Canon Mahoney's doctrine, even as I understood it, rightly described by Mr. Lunn as heretical, he would not repudiate, since such repudiation would have meant abandonment of an argument against me and perhaps the collapse of the only possible defence of a policy of silence about the late Cardinal's false doctrine regarding the Schools Question.

At this point I wrote (February 5th) a letter in which I summed up the present position as I see

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it; and I sent a copy of it to the Archbishop and to Mr. Lunn—again only to be met with silence. Such are the facts of this strange affair. It seems to me that if I am sane my distinguished opponents have quite lost their reason. Of course, it may be that I am one of those insane people who attribute insanity to all the world except themselves; but I am hoping that your readers will agree that my position has been not only sane but perfectly simple all through. Will the Archbishop still decline, as the late Cardinal did, to teach Catholics the actual doctrines taught in our Church by standard theologians hitherto? **John V. Simcox.**

KINGS, OIL AND WATER

Sir,—Your article did real service to the progressive cause when it extended your practice of fact-finding analysis into the affairs of the Middle East. In this country legendary and romantic ideas about Arab statesmen and their following easily become interwoven with fact. Your paper has now led the way towards a real analysis, from the progressive point of view, of the factors which make up the Middle Eastern political scene.

The principle of Socialist policy everywhere, namely, that constructive economic and social policies matter more than kings and rulers, applies with even greater force to the Middle East, where millions of Arab toiling masses live in a state of feudal subjection, with a standard of living which cannot even be compared with that of the British worker at the time of the Industrial Revolution. The Jews of Palestine and their strong Labour Movement have, in fact, been the only constructive element in the whole of that region, and as a result of their work the standard of living of the Arab worker in Palestine is higher than that of the worker in any other Middle Eastern country. The reactionary forces in Arab society naturally oppose this constructive effort, but, as you have said, we as Socialists have the duty of lending strong support to the one element which actually creates and works for economic and social progress.

A progressive Jewish Palestine is not incompatible with the progress of the vast Arab States. The United Nations should encourage and back the work of the Jews in Palestine on the one hand, and on the other, extend moral, economic and social help to the Arab States with a view to diverting Arab rulers away from empty power-politics into constructive channels of progress, for the benefit of the millions of their Arab citizens.

It is a good omen that this line of policy has recently been adopted by the British Labour Party, by the World Trade Union Conference (with the approval of the Russian Delegation), and by the recent London Conference of International Socialist parties. **Philip Jacobson**

105, Beech Avenue,
Newton Mearns, Renfrewshire.

Sir,—It was the Mongol hordes of Hulugu Khan, not "Norman conquerors," who destroyed the irrigation systems of Irak, chiefly by the wholesale slaughter of the workers of it. The irrigation system of Egypt is based on a different regime and has never been disrupted. Space forbids any detailed description, but a flight from Baghdad to Mosul reveals the dead skeleton of canals and the corpses of innumerable towns. This system could be restored. The Romans conserved water by dams and cisterns in parts of Palestine and the Negeb, where abandoned towns and fields were revealed during the last war by Turko-German air-photographs. But these fell into disuse long before the Crusades, probably through the devastations of the invading Arabs.

British rule has greatly improved the irrigation systems of Egypt and the Sudan, but chiefly for the benefit of British capitalists and the native bourgeoisie. Cotton supplants corn and other food plants, and an unstable artificial regime is established, at the mercy of market fluctuations. The actual administrators, whose sympathies are with the inhabitants in every case I have come across, must not be blamed for a state of affairs for which they are not responsible. This is the inevitable result of the capitalist system which, like its oil, does not mix with water. The cure lies at home. **O. G. S. Crawford**

Nursling, Southampton.

[The author of the article did his best to attribute the destruction (with historical accuracy) to "Nomad conquerors." Printer and proof-reader conspired to defeat him.—Ed., *N.S. & N.*]

THE COUNTRYSIDE

Sir,—The farm labourer's life presents an idyllic picture to Barrow Green Court. For 3*s.* a week rent (lowest, not average) this highly-paid and generously provisioned worker receives a picturesque cottage with one or two bedrooms; a picturesque cast-iron pump, often to be shared with several other families, which supplies water (boil before drinking) except in summer, when the well runs dry; and a garden, not larger than that of the average suburban villa but with the inestimable advantage of having at the bottom of it a home production humus shed.

In this garden, after nine hours or more of producing food for somebody else, the labourer passes his evenings in producing food for himself and family thus at the same time getting healthy relaxation and a necessary supplement to his wages. Often he also has, again like the town worker, an allotment, from which he gets still further supplements.

For lighting he uses paraffin which, if he can afford an expensive lamp, gives tolerable illumination; if not, it gives migraine. But what with the garden and shooting wood rabbits, he doesn't need the light except for showing him to bed.

Cooking is done by oil stove or kitchener—again a question of expense. The kitchener is cosier, but the oil stove, if an encouragement to dirt, can be turned on or off at will, an advantage in high summer when cosiness so easily becomes excessive.

Some labourers there are, a minority, who have to put up with electricity, running water, indoor sanitation, even a bath. Generally they are paying about ten shillings—sometimes as much as thirteen shillings —a week for a council house.

Rosemary, **Peter Thompson**
Bledlow Ridge, Bucks.

TELEPATHY

Sir,—In connection with Dr. C. E. M. Joad's article on *Telepathy*, our readers may like to know what Sigismund Freud has to say on this subject. He devotes a chapter of "New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis" to the problem of telepathy.

A small number of his patients had at one time or another of their lives consulted a fortune-teller. Their "prophecies" did not come true in any of the cases, but during analysis of the patients it transpired that what the fortune-tellers had "seen" and expressed as prophecies bore a striking resemblance to certain unconscious repressed wishes which were revealed in analysis, but were of course completely unknown to the fortune-tellers.

Other interesting examples are given which prompt Freud to sum up his attitude towards telepathy in these words:—

> If one gets used to the idea of telepathy, one can account for a great deal by means of it. . . . It is a familiar fact that we have no notion of how the communal will of the great insect states comes about. Possibly it works by means of mental transference of this direct kind. One is led to conjecture that this may be the original archaic method by which individuals understood one another, and which has been pushed into the background in the course of phylogenetic development by the better method of communication by means of signs apprehended by the sense organs. . . .

K. B. K.

Ready Thursday

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". . A challenging indictment, all the more damaging for its general dispassionate objectivity . . . The implications are squarely faced, even when they lead to such melancholy conclusions as 'the village of a few hundred people cannot survive as a healthy organism.' Dr. Orwin and his staff have outlined the peasant's Magna Carta . . ."
—Times Educational Supplement

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

This admirable selection* by the Coles of Cobbett's opinions—it is, for wartime, extremely well produced; the difficult selection has been judiciously and representatively made, and the Coles's introduction is as full of wisdom as it is of information—affords a good opportunity for consideration of this remarkable man. Cobbett belongs to a line of representative Englishmen who form a recognisable and distinctive strand in the complex rope of our literary history. It is the line of expositors, educationists, reformers and haters of abuses who, relying mainly upon assertion to convince and upon argument to persuade, and wielding sometimes the bludgeon of invective, sometimes the rapier of irony, make fools of their victims with satire or fun of them with wit. Outstanding names in this tradition are those of Swift, Samuel Butler, Bernard Shaw, and H. W. Massingham. Cobbett had something in common with all of them. Like Swift, he was a master of graphic, descriptive prose. He was particularly apt at illustrating abstract argument with concrete example and, as the Coles point out, "appeared always to be talking about real things and real people, and not about abstractions." Also he knew what he hated and didn't mince words when it came to expressing his hatred. Hear him, for example, on a judge who has proposed an amendment to the Mutiny Act to permit imprisonment as an alternative to "corporal infliction."

> *Corporal infliction!* Why do you mince the matter? Why not name the thing? *Flog* is *flog*, and *flogging* is the active participle of the verb *to flog*. *Flog, flogging, flogged.* That is the word; and it means, in this sense of it, to whip the naked back (and, sometimes, *other parts*) of a soldier, with a thing called a *cat;* that is to say. . . .

And so on to a fairly detailed description. Admirable! If enough historians would describe a siege, a bombardment, a wound, an amputation or gangrene with similar realism, bombardments, wounds and the rest would be fewer. Also, like Swift, Cobbett could be bitter, violent and coarse and could glory in it. Indeed, he calls Swift in evidence for his own comfort and justification, quoting from him:

> "The moment a man of real talent makes his first appearance before the public, the whole battalion of dunces beat to arms and sally forth against him; and down he falls for ever, if he have not courage as well as talent." "I am infinitely indebted to him," comments Cobbett, "for having enabled me to read these words."

As for coarseness, after a long denunciation of corruption, of sycophancy and of oppression we find him justifying himself with:

> Yes, it is *coarse* indeed, and coarse it ought to be in a case like this. Swift has told us not to chop *blocks* with *razors*. Any *edge*-tool is too fine for work like this; a pickaxe, that perforates with one end and drags about with the other, is the tool for this sort of business.

Or consider his affinity with Mill. Both Cobbett and Mill believed that they knew what was right; believed, too, that what was wrong was largely due to people's stupidity, and that they had only to knock a little sense into thick heads and their owners would see what was amiss and put it right. They believed, in other words, in argument and in advocacy precisely because they also believed that man is at bottom reasonable and that, if the truth is presented to him often enough, persuasively enough and cogently enough, he will see it and act accordingly. "What we principally thought of," says Mill, speaking of himself and his friends the young Utilitarians, "was to alter other people's opinions; to make them believe according to the evidence, and know what was their real interest, which, when they knew, they would, we thought, by the instrument of opinion, enforce a regard to it upon one another."

And here is Cobbett:

> Who besides myself has, in our day, attempted to gain popularity by dint of fact and of argument, unmixed with any thing to amuse the human mind? . . . I have rested my reputation upon the success of truth supported by dry argument . . . I knew, however, that I was gradually making converts, though I very seldom saw any outward proof of the fact.

It was perhaps in the nature of the age, perhaps in the nature of the men, that both of them should have entertained what seems to us a naïve belief in the virtues of adult suffrage and Parliamentary reform. The Mills, both father and son, often wrote as if they believed that education, freedom of speech and writing, the secret ballot and the suffrage, would introduce the millennium; while Cobbett, in recommending Parliamentary reform, seems to have thought that it would put an end to everything he hated from the introduction of new agricultural techniques to the extension of the "Wen," and from tea to industrialism.

While, like Samuel Butler and Shaw, Cobbett is a master of a plain prose style, like both of them he makes nothing of style and conducts the business of prose writing on the explicit assumption that it is only necessary to say a thing as plainly, briefly and forcibly as you know how, and good writing will result. What matters is the wares a man brings to market, not the vehicle in which they are carried. Here, for example, is Butler:

> I should like to put it on record that I never took the smallest pains with my style, have never thought about it, and do not know or want to know whether it is a style at all, or whether it is not, as I believe and hope, just common, simple straightforwardness.

Here is Shaw:

> Effectiveness of assertion is the alpha and omega of style. He who has nothing to assert has no style and can have none; he who has something to assert will go as far in power of style as its momentousness and his conviction will carry him.

Now Cobbett:

> I listen to nothing about *style* as it is called; or any thing else. As the man who soonest and best weaves a yard of cloth is the best weaver, so the man who soonest and best accomplishes an object with his pen, is the best writer.

Like Shaw, Cobbett maintained that all the best writing is a form of journalism—"The man who writes about himself and his own time is the only man who writes about all people and about all time. . . . And so let others cultivate what they call literature; journalism for me!" (Shaw)—and in an interesting paper on the writing of history Cobbett makes the point that if history is to be truthful and readable, it must be written not a century or so after the events it records, but "at the moment that the facts occurred." (It is no accident, I think, that so much of Cobbett's writing strikes one as first-rate journalism.) Characteristically—and in this there is another parallel with Butler—he sets great store by handwriting, and says that he throws into the fire every letter he receives which is badly written, as showing slovenliness and ill manners.

What he has in common with all these men—it is after all his bravest and most endearing trait—is a hatred of cruelty and injustice. He knew, as they did, an unjust thing, a cruel thing and a mean thing, wherever and whenever he found them, and he did not hesitate to call them by their right names. It is in this sense, the Coles insist, that he was a Radical, "the greatest Radical of his day." He was so, because he never came face to face with an abuse that caused human suffering without putting forth all his powers to denounce it and set it right.

But now—and here comes the surprising thing, the thing that seems like a complete break with all that goes before, the thing that marks Cobbett off from both his predecessors and his successors and sets him apart—the man was also a Tory. I don't mean merely that he started life with Tory opinions from which he was weaned by the spectacle of the oppression and rapacity of the possessing classes during and after the French Revolutionary Wars. I mean also that in spite of his later Radical opinions he remained a Tory in tastes throughout the whole of his life. The reason, I think, lies in another characteristic which distinguishes him from the other names on my list: he was the only one among them who knew anything of the country. While they were townsmen and of the town, he had the country in his bones. He hates all new-fangled improvements such as tea and groceries; he has a peasant's distrust of the doctor and won't have him in the house; will have his food produced, baked, brewed, prepared and cooked on his farm; admires the old-established order of masters and men, landowners and labourers, all in their places and doing their proper jobs—it was the industrial revolution and the large employer of labour that he hated; dislikes foreigners; thinks the country is going to the dogs, but nevertheless praises the Englishman because he gives himself no leisure, works hard and cannot play. Why does he beat everybody else at games and sports? Because he cannot play even at these: he must work at them. Cobbett praises the "walking mania," thinks a fox hunt "the finest sight in England," and holds that "fox hunting squires and parsons" are "as usefully employed in this way as they would be in any other," partly because, "by following this sport they set an example of adventurous riding to those beneath them"; in respect of all of which things, or rather in respect of their descendants both good and evil a hundred years later, I agree with him.

It is this conjunction of country roots and urban flowering, of Tory tastes and Radical opinions, that endears Cobbett to the heart of the present reviewer; it also, I think, makes him unique.

C. E. M. Joad

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* The Opinions of William Cobbett. Edited by G. D. H. and Margaret Cole. *Cobbett Publishing Company*, 10s. 6d.

MR. AUDEN, CONJURER

For the Time Being. By W. H. Auden. *Faber.* 8s. 6d.

This new volume from Mr. Auden, the second during the war, contains two long dramatic poems: "The Sea and the Mirror," described as a commentary on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*; and "For the Time Being," a Christmas oratorio. Together they indicate—indicate, I believe, rather than express—a crisis in the author's life, but before standing back let us examine the poems themselves. The danger is, since Mr. Auden has never been more elusive than he shows himself here, that we may weary of his adroitness, and content ourselves with picking a few favourite passages.

Commentary on *The Tempest*. One imagines a performance over, or an audience that has just read the play settling down in its seats to listen further. Preface from the producer to the critics: The magic has worked again, art has won sympathy for heroic temptation, we have been entertained by dreams and go back to a world no more substantial:

> All the rest is silence
> On the other side of the wall;
> And the silence ripeness,
> And the ripeness all.

Chapter I.—Prospero, packing, takes leave of Ariel—his tempter and youthful genius. He defines magic as "the power to enchant that comes from disillusion." He has failed badly with Antonio (whom he tempted to treason); with Caliban, "my impervious disgrace." Good-bye to heavy-headed Alonso, weak Sebastian, guzzling Stephano, stale Trinculo—each, in a novelist's dismissive paragraph, is assured a modest enlightenment in the coming years. And the lovers?

> Their eyes are big and blue with love; its lighting
> Makes even us look new: yes, to-day it all looks so easy.
> Will Ferdinand be as fond of a Miranda
> Familiar as a stocking? . . .

After the landscapes and cities of his own enchantment, the wizard opens his eyes to the real journey that has to be made, inch by inch, in old age. Good criticism of the play, all this chapter, and good Auden. Chapter II consists of monologues by the characters on board as they sail away. Adds little to the previous chapter. Love lyric of Miranda, "My dear one is mine as mirrors are lonely"; almost, but not quite, first-rate. The real triumph of this section is the sequel to Shakespeare's "The master, the swabber, the boatswain and I." Auden's drinking song for master and boatswain begins:

> At Dirty Dick's and Sloppy Joe's
> We drank our liquor straight,
> Some went upstairs with Margery,
> And some, alas, with Kate;
> And two by two, like cat and mouse,
> The homeless played at keeping house.

Chapter III, Caliban to the audience, is in prose. What prose! At a first hasty reading my eye slid over the pompous elaboration of sentences, the tart mock-solemnity, catching hold of a phrase—"the suburban wonder as to what the strait-laced Unities might possibly think, or sad sour Probability possibly say"—and then slipping again. Twenty-seven pages more than exhaust a style, claimed by some as a parody of Henry James. Why drag in James, though, a delicate sprawler, in order to be tediously cumbersome at the reader's expense? Shakespeare's Caliban speaks out of character perhaps in lines of poetry that surpass any given to Ariel, but to redress the balance by making the boor a bore is no improvement. Mr. Auden, through the mouth of Caliban, has, in fact, a great deal to say that is of interest about *The Tempest,* about the nature of art and the artist. He rounds off the criticism of Prospero—a more subtle argument than Browning's theology on an island—as an offender against Nature, against the flesh vilified to give wing to the imagination. The point of view shifts a number of times; at one moment Caliban claims as his mother the Goddess of Love, at another he argues in favour of ugliness, that without it we should not recognise beauty, and by turns he is Life breaking in on Art's tea-party and the despised rebellious flesh of the poet. An extraordinary virtuosity has wrapped this agility in the folds of a pachydermatous prose, as though an elephant were to dance on a tight-rope. In one passage Mr. Auden throws off his disguises and speaks from the heart—in the nostalgic return to childhood:

> Pity me, Captain, pity a poor old stranded sea-salt whom an unlucky voyage has wrecked on the desolate mahogany coast of this bar with nothing left him but his big moustache. Give me my passage home, let me see that harbour once again, just as it was before I learned the bad words. Patriarchs wiser than Abraham mended their nets on the modest wharf; white and wonderful beings undressed on the sand-dunes; sunset glittered on the plate-glass windows of the Marine Biological Institute; far off on the extreme horizon a whale spouted. Look, Uncle, look. They have broken my glasses and I have lost my silver whistle. Pick me up. . . .

To this awkward-sensitive Caliban, Ariel—speaking for the first time in a lyrical postscript—replies:

> Weep no more but pity me,
> Fleet persistent shadow cast
> By your lameness, caught at last,
> Helplessly in love with you,
> Elegance, art, fascination,
> Fascinated by
> Drab mortality. . . .

So, if the quarrel between Soul and Body, Art and Life, Youth and Disillusion, isn't made up, their necessary infatuation is sealed. "The Sea and the Mirror"—brilliant, boring, elaborate, momentous, tricky—must rank high among Mr. Auden's sustained efforts.

The Christmas Oratorio, after a promising start in the measure of "Brightness falls from the air," contains all the faults and few of the merits of the other poem. The conflict staged this time is of innocence and experience, Fall and Redemption, the introvert's hell, extrovert's Heaven; and the method adopted by Mr. Auden all through is one—that comes to him far too easily—of paradox and sleight of hand. For an ancient theme he supplies modern settings; he is solemn over trivialities, and where you would expect him to be serious he affects jauntiness:

> My shoes were shined, my pants were cleaned and pressed,
> And I was hurrying to meet
> My own true love . . .

A bright enough beginning for a modern ballad; but why entitle it "St. Joseph" and introduce the Annunciation with the following chorus?

> Joseph, you have heard
> What Mary says occurred;
> Yes, it may be so.
> Is it likely? No.

The great themes of religion may occasionally transform doggerel, but not self-conscious doggerel. If Mr. Auden's aim were blasphemy, the means would at least be well suited; but his intention is, as it were, a shocking reverence. And shocking I think it is. Another example (one of many): *The Flight into Egypt* is modernised with a few near-limericks:

> Come to our old-world desert,
> Where everyone goes to pieces;
> You can pick up tears
> For souvenirs,
> Or genuine diseases.

Once again Mr. Auden's intentions are good: by mimicry of the present he would bring Christ's nativity closer and set it in startling relief. Negroes can do it, why not Mr. Auden? The answer is that he is too clever by half. Moreover, he is uncertain of his beliefs. The most convincing section of this poem is, not the final chorus "He is the Way . . . He is the Truth . . . He is the Life," but the penultimate:

> Well, so that is that. Now we must dismantle the tree,
> Putting the decorations back into their cardboard boxes—
> Some have got broken—and carrying them up to the attic.
> The holly and the mistletoe must be taken down and burnt,
> And the children got ready for school . . .
> Once again
> As in previous years we have seen the actual vision and failed
> To do more than entertain it as an agreeable
> Possibility, once again we have sent Him away,
> Begging though to remain his disobedient servant. . . .

And earlier in the poem the credo of Simeon and Herod's worldly-wise confession have nicely balanced belief and disbelief.

The trouble with the whole poem seems to be that, while Mr. Auden's religious hesitation may be genuine enough, he has only been able to write about it by foxing the reader: I can detect rarely a hint of the passion that distinguished, for example, the poems of Mr. Eliot's conversion. His publisher suggests that Mr. Auden's previous book, *New Year Letter*—which over-pompously intoned its message—was "an *interim* work," while here once again the main road of his development is resumed. I must disagree with this judgment. I believe that Mr. Auden may have had misgivings since about *New Year Letter*; but certainly the quest for a religion hinted at in that volume has been taken a step farther without any corresponding poetic gain. The two poems of *For the Time Being* reveal in dramatic form two sides of his nature: the first (the artist, playing with Shakespeare, waving good-bye to his youth) is pretty sure of itself even when wrong; the second (the would-be believer) shows a marked decline in the ability that goes with resolution. The conjurer tries here to bring off the miracle of faith. It won't work. We put the book down, fascinated and tired by its disguises, wondering which way its author will turn now. The same possibilities, of rejecting or accepting Christianity, seem to face him as before. A three-quarter acceptance, an artful Yes-No-And-Perhaps, is unlikely to lead to anything better than this Oratorio. But, one way or the other, if his poetry is to survive, he will have to choose.

G. W. STONIER

CHANGING CHINA

I See a New China. By GEORGE HOGG.
Gollancz. 6s.

The Making of Modern China. By OWEN and ELEANOR LATTIMORE. *Allen and Unwin.*
8s. 6d.

"Remoter than China" is a phrase still used to describe the unfamiliar. And it is true that time and space combine to make difficulties in presenting an intimate picture of the Chinese landscape to the European. Traditional geographers have rarely breathed life into the loess plains of the north or the rice fields of the south, and traditional historians have rarely avoided a confused picture of successive dynasties. Both geographer and historian have had to deal with the uncomplimentary picture of British penetration superimposed on the Chinese picture. By dramatising a Chinese family, Pearl Buck gave a vast audience its first intimacy with the Chinese people. But her picture has now become stylised and static at a time when the history of China is moving at a quicker tempo than at any other in her long story. George Hogg, in *I See a New China,* has written a personal account of his own experiences during the past three years, and introduces us to the same people we have learnt to know in Pearl Buck's novels. The background is the same—poverty and epidemics and war; but the characters are all alive. The printer who volunteers to go back to an occupied city to fetch supplies of oil and medicine and is killed by the Japanese sentry at the city gate; the shoemaker from the shoemakers' co-op. who is intercepted as he carries shoe-soles across the blockade lines into Chinese territory; the illiterate papermaker who becomes chairman of a co-operative; the co-operative office where the workers march out with their portable desks at 5.30 each morning during good bombing weather to work under a clump of willow trees; the Mohammedan fur-co-operative and the students' dramatic corps.

George Hogg sees the hope of a new China in the work of the Chinese Industrial Co-operatives, and with disinterestedness and courage has worked for the past three years in a movement where there is "a comradeship and equality in a national cause." His particular contribution, Rewi Alley tells us in an introduction, has been in the training of co-operative apprentices and junior technicians, and the last part of *I See a New China* is a fascinating analysis of the Baillie Schools and their experiments in co-operative education. This is the first personal account of the Chinese Industrial Co-operatives; it is a valuable document which will help us to understand more intimately the problems and the hopes of China in her approaching industrialisation.

Owen and Eleanor Lattimore, both distinguished geographers who have lived in China for many years, have presented us with a first-class historical geography of the country. It has never been more simply presented; climate and mountain range and rivers are described as the background of millions of people throughout the centuries. Who are the Chinese and where they come from, what they are like, the balance of power between China and the "barbarians" of the outlying regions, are described with the simplicity which only an expert can achieve. The Lattimores know how badly Chinese history has been taught—"as a baffling catalogue of who slew anybody, who begat somebody, who succeeded somebody, with only an occasional concubine thrown in for human interest." Their own description of nearly four thousand years of continuous civilisation introduces us to the peasants who are the backbone of that history, reveals their relationship with landlords and with the bureaucracy which grew up around "the rent-collecting landlord and the tax-collecting government official." These "were often one and the same man." The scholar-landlord, since he was literate, dominated the administration. These factors in Chinese life are described with such intimate understanding that the cycles of Chinese history become intelligible.

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But the skill in depicting Chinese history is not reflected in Part Three of this book. Perhaps the authors were too near to this period, too closely involved in its development. The nearer they approach contemporary China the more they substitute diplomacy for social analysis. The realisation of China as a vast potential market was one of the major factors in Anglo-Chinese relations. That it developed at a time when the Manchu dynasty was already decadent, and China therefore a politically weak nation, is a point which the authors mainly overlook. It was the advantage taken of this coincidence by British traders, and later by those of other nations, which goes so far in explaining the difficulties existing in our relations with China to-day.

The second point where the authors, obviously skating on very thin ice, show themselves careful politicians is in dealing with the question of Communist-Kuomintang relations. This is understandable; Owen Lattimore was Political Adviser to the Generalissimo for a short period, and he probably feels unable to write freely on the subject. But people who want to understand some of the complexities of this problem, on the solution of which the future of democracy in China will depend, will find no guidance in *The Making of Modern China.*

Nevertheless, this book should be read by student and adult alike. In the one case it will provide a fascinating background for an understanding of Chinese history, and in the other it may help to undo the harm which biased historians, dull geographers and proselytising missionaries have combined to do, in presenting a picture of China. DOROTHY WOODMAN

THE WRONG ROAD?

Road to Calvary. By ALEXEI TOLSTOY. *Hutchinson. 12s. 6d.*

This was virtually a life-work. Not that it was Alexei Tolstoy's sole preoccupation during the period from 1919 to 1941, but that it did undoubtedly represent his most ambitious enterprise in fiction. The greater part of twenty-two years!—it is alarming to contemplate. Proust spent less than fifteen, Flaubert nine at the most, on a single novel, Joyce a bare seven on *Ulysses.* It is unusual for a novelist to take even such a dangerous plunge as Joyce's, and Balzac is no exception. His novels are not roped together, nor mutually bound to perish or triumph. The failures in no way detract from the greatness of the rest.

It was a horrible picture which Mr. Somerset Maugham recently gave us of a life-work (theological, I think) of equal devotion and futility. Yet even that is a degree less horrid than the spectacle of a genuinely talented man whose talents were early misdirected, and could never, in the long stubbornness of his chosen enterprise, escape to a happier path. Maugham's character may have spent a harmless and happy life; he had, one imagines, nothing to waste. But where there is talent there is responsibility. The great danger of the life-work is that the writer commits himself to a rigidity and immobility which he may regret too late. It is true that a long novel may unfold greater powers as it and its author develop, but such a flowering is strictly limited by the claims of artistic unity. No balanced work of art could begin with *Les Chouans* and end with *Le Lys dans la Vallée.*

In the case of a writer who has chosen a grand theme and has failed to do it justice, there is a critical temptation to resist. Had he been content, one longs to say, with something smaller, finer, more digestible. . . . But it may well be that his talent was only for the grand, and that it is precisely the small which he has seen to be too much for him. Much of Zola would have been as well unwritten, but should he for this reason have tried to write like Huysmans?

In the case of Alexei Tolstoy the question has been cruelly simplified by his recent death. All the data are before us, and we cannot speculate on the future. He will write nothing more. Yet he is notably in the category which most excites speculation: a powerful talent quite without that greatness which chooses its path with inspired certainty and denies our right to question the choice. Since this is the only work by the writer which I have read, I can judge the wisdom of the enterprise only on internal evidence. Does it, then, appear to be the work of a man who exploited his talent to the full, who could not have done better? I am sure the answer must be No.

It is far more than the family name which compels a comparison with *War and Peace.* It is more than the fact that the two books cover approximately the same number of momentous years in Russian history. In externals, *Road to Calvary* seems almost consciously imitative. Here, too, we find an innumerable host of subsidiary characters, a few who dominate and hold the threads. Here we find the same sudden transitions from an account of personal life to the great panorama of a battle-field—or, more striking still, to some lofty historical thesis. A personal narrative has closed Chapter XVI of the first part. Chapter XVII begins: "All conceptions of war as a series of dashing cavalry charges, extraordinary feats of marching and heroic exploits by soldiers and officers proved utterly out of date. The total result of the famous charge of the Horse Guards . . ." But for the historical banality (as opposed to laboured wrong-headedness) of the quotation, these might well be the words of the greater Tolstoy. Even the principals are like diminutive silhouettes of those intimates and giants of the other book. In the good, confused Telegin there is much of Pierre, in Dasha more of Natasha, and in Roshchin all of Prince Andrey except the life. And how similar the devices of their presentation! Time and again in *War and Peace* we hover high above some great turmoil of flight or battle, swoop suddenly on to one of the characters caught up in it and recognise a known face. With less than half the skill this other Tolstoy carries out the same operation.

The real complaint is that the thing has been done already, and done too well to be imitated. The sad, certain result is that the book is artistically inconsiderable. And yet by no means worthless. The talent here is not confined to the immense—though many of the great crowded scenes are vividly described. There is a fine humour and perception in the multitudinous fleeting portraits, something thoroughly Russian, wholly felicitous. There is great architectural skill in the book's construction (somewhat marred by too many clumsy coincidences). There is not, I think, much psychological depth or historical understanding. There is a broad and passionate patriotism, here wholly beneficial in the insight it gives to atmosphere and occasion. The writer's shamefaced admiration for Kornilov and the Officer Corps is often engaging. There is far less propaganda and direct historical distortion than might have been feared.

But it is hard to doubt that Alexei Tolstoy would have done better had he concentrated his talent, experimented, retreated, advanced in a new direction, at last discovered the form most suited to the nature of his gifts. He produced an interesting and sympathetic study of Russia between 1914 and 1919. He might have left a work of art. PHILIP TOYNBEE

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THE NEXT PARISH TO AMERICA

The Western Island. By ROBIN FLOWER. *Oxford University Press.* *7s. 6d.*

Keats went "round many western islands," but another poet, Robin Flower, has concentrated upon one—the Great Blasket. This outpost of Europe, off the Atlantic coast of Ireland, is known by its hundred and fifty natives as "the next parish to America." They think—or rather they thought, for, since the last war, their numbers have diminished rapidly—in terms of parishes. The town of Dingle, across the strait on the mainland, is for them a metropolis; and of the events of history, they can only comprehend these in a local way, so that the wrecking of the Spanish Armada is a timeless folktale, of equal value with the tales of the fairies that come from time to time for burial on the neighbouring rock of Inisicileain.

Since 1911 Mr. Flower, who has made the Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the British Museum, has spent his summer holidays every year on Great Blasket, taking up annually his serial friendships with the Irish-speaking folk there, living in their earth-crouched houses, and taking down the tales and poems with which they have habitually beguiled their indoor life. This book is an account of some of the outstanding moments in those holidays, linking a narration of a few of the most perfectly made tales, and translations of the poems (though many of the latter have already appeared in Mr. Flower's own book of poems some years ago).

It will be seen at once that this book is valuable as a latter-day, direct record of a primitive way of life, a life still tribal, that is probably the last survival in Europe, though no doubt in the Balkans there are comparable pockets. Mr. Flower says that newspapers, books and the radio have already penetrated to Dingle and Dunquin on the mainland, to bewilder the islanders on their periodical visits, and to befog their wonderful memories, the memories of illiterates.

When Mr. Flower first went there over thirty years ago, the folk practised "the old medieval common-field system, under which one man owned strips of lands scattered over the whole area, in a fashion only identifiable by an expert in traditional lore." But at that time this ancient mode was being displaced by the Congested Districts Board in favour of the "system under which each family has its land concentrated in convenient blocks of arable and pasture." The Board was also building brick cottages, that stood up instead of crouching like the ancient stone huts, and thus caught the Atlantic gales.

These economic introductions were immediately smeared with lore by the natives, just as the oyster makes its pearl round the intruding grain of sand. The new dispensation was made just as timeless as the doings of the medieval hermits and the Renaissance Spaniards. The way of life of these people was still poetic, built in terms of image and symbol; and their self-expression was vented accordingly. Here is an instance, that reflects too the localising habit upon which I have already commented. On one of his visits, Mr. Flower found a number of his island friends gathered in a cottage to greet him. The talk soon turned to the telling of tales of events old and new. "Suddenly, an old woman in the corner leaned forward and said with an air of finality, 'Where is the snow that was so bright last year?' I sprang up in excitement and cried out: 'Où sont les neiges d'antan?' 'Who said that?' asked the King (the title of the head man), an expert in this lore. 'François Villon said it,' I replied. 'And who was he?' he returned. 'Was he a Connaught man?'"

As Mr. Flower reminds the reader, his book is the last possible effort to record the appearance and texture of the remnant of those snows of yesteryear. The book, therefore, has a double value: for the ethnologist, and for the lover of the heroic way of life, when the getting of food, the begetting of children, and the making of songs and myths, were everyday processes. The book is sensitively illustrated by Mr. Flower's wife.

RICHARD CHURCH

A GERMAN PHILOSOPHER

Wilhelm Dilthey: An Introduction. By H. A. HODGES. *Kegan Paul.* 10*s.* 6*d.*

Professor Hodges deserves praise for attempting to present the British reader with an estimate of the philosophical life-work of Wilhelm Dilthey, a figure who, like Jacob Burckhardt or Lord Acton, had hardly any contemporaries.

It is now a little more than thirty years since Wilhelm Dilthey died, leaving behind him the massive torso that was his life-work. Although for decades he taught philosophy at the University of Berlin, he was by no means a typical German professor; he was an original thinker of great stature, whose work can probably be better understood to-day than at the time of his death.

Fresh from the study of theology, Dilthey very soon came under the spell of Schleiermacher's philosophy, which led him to a thorough examination of the epoch of German idealistic philosophy.

The time was the Eighties. There were doubts about the trend towards materialism and the natural sciences of German post-Hegel thought, and it became necessary to examine the natural-sciences method closely and at the same time to make room for the human studies. Dilthey lived in a European atmosphere. In antithesis to the positivism of Comte and Mill, the German thinker pointed to the reality of the historical world. Comte and Mill, says Dilthey in his foreword to the *Introduction to the Human Studies*, a work of which only the first volume was ever written, "seem to me to mutilate the historical world in order to adapt it to the concepts and methods of the Natural Sciences." What he had in mind was nothing less than a "Critique of Historical Reason."

Man is no abstraction, but an historical being. Only through history can we recognise his being; but at the same time Dilthey recognised the danger of historical relativism. Does not a basic structure, perceivable by the philosopher, run through the whole historical formation of man? Man, when he inquires philosophically into the nature of his being, cannot stop at the historical interpretation. Can a philosophical system be evolved from the historical analysis of European mankind? That was Dilthey's lasting problem, and one with which he wrestled almost tragically during his whole life.

Seen from this angle, Dilthey's philosophy may be defined as the attempt to unite German romantic Historicism with the Western Natural-Law tradition. He was drawn to German Romanticism by deep personal ties; indeed, he dedicated masterpieces to Novalis, Hölderlin and the young Hegel.

Hardly was the first volume of the *Introduction to the Human Studies* completed, than Dilthey went further. The *Introduction* had covered—what a theme!—the history of Western metaphysics from the classic Greek beginnings to the emergence of modern scientific awareness.

And now the great thinker began on his succession of pioneer studies on the analysis and interpretation of Man in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, now brought together into the second volume of his Collected Works. Although decades have passed since these essays were completed, to-day they are still among the

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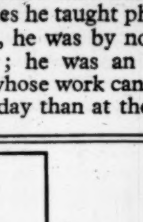
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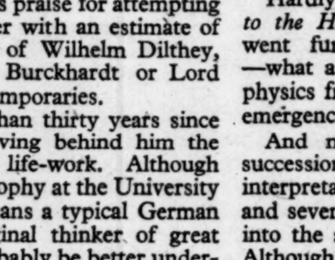

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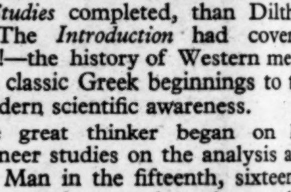

No doctor recommends kerb-queueing as a winter pastime, but we all have to take these health risks. The wise man takes counter-measures and one of the best ways is to sunbathe regularly. What, in Winter? Yes, with a Hanovia sunlamp. ("Colds are unknown among the regular users" writes a R.A.F. doctor.) The 'Homesun 100'—the reliable domestic sunlamp is now available again in limited quantity for advance bookings. Price £17.10. Ask your electrical supplier or write for booklet 143. (Send 1d. stamp please).
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best that has been written on the historical and systematic structure of this epoch of Europeanism. (Unfortunately, they are known to only a small circle of English readers, as they have never been translated.) A German historian of Europeanism, of the European sources of our knowledge of Man? Yes, indeed. Never since—perhaps with the exception of Acton—has any thinker been able to gather together, so carefully and convincingly, the threads in the tissue of our common historical heritage.

Here again Dilthey left only a torso. From historical research he turned—often simultaneously—to systematic, "cognitive" analysis. At the turn of the century he called these studies—influenced by Nietzsche and Bergson—attempts at the "Understanding of Life." And now the two opposites were: Explanation and Understanding. The Natural Sciences explain; the task of the Human Studies is to understand. But only Life understands Life. In ever more complex notes Dilthey sought a philosophy of life which would unify History and System. These notes, taken from the manuscripts which he left, are now to be found in the seventh volume of his Collected Works. They rank among the most profound writings ever inspired by German philosophy. All these works remained fragments. Neither the historical studies, nor the systematic analyses of the categories of life, were completed. In the last year of his life, Dilthey once again turned to "his" Schleiermacher. But death took the pen from the hand of this restless old man. Surveying Dilthey's work as a whole, one is tempted to call it a titanic torso.

Professor Hodges chooses a more systematic approach towards an understanding of Dilthey than I have attempted in this review. I suppose he has thereby made an understanding of his book not too easy for the uninitiated. Those who have studied Dilthey will find several points highly debatable. I think that Dilthey was much nearer to Husserl than Professor Hodges seems to admit, and I also doubt whether Dilthey can be regarded as a "relativist"; his own words (*see* G.S. V,9) are definitely against this interpretation. One might also wish that Dilthey's more specifically sociological concepts had been considered, particularly from the point of view of *The International Library of Sociology and Reconstruction* in which the volume appears. Finally, I am not certain whether it is possible to extract, from a great thinker's life-work of more than a dozen volumes, twenty-nine short passages of hardly more than two pages each as "illustrations." Not only must the choice remain arbitrary, but the undertaking itself hardly serves a clear educational purpose.

J. P. MAYER

Week-end Competitions

No. 789

Special Competition. Set by Raymond Mortimer

Reserved for entrants abroad. Prizes of four guineas are offered for four lines of verse about the place at home that they most look forward to seeing again. Competitors may send several entries, which must arrive by August 1st. Envelopes to be marked "Special Competition."

No. 790

Set by C. Urchin

The usual prizes are offered for a monologue (limit 150 words) from Mrs. G., a snob hostess, confronted in her doorway by a figure who *may* be the well-known authoress she has tried to hook for her tea-party, or, equally well, the new maid sent on to her by Lady X. Not for worlds would she offend either; and her visitor is obviously unforthcoming. Entries should be received by March 26th.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 786

Set by Nym

The usual prizes are offered for a letter of about 200 words sent by a periodical editor to "Constant Reader," who has just written setting out his reasons for transferring his patronage to another journal.

Report by Nym

I had hoped this competition would produce Johnsonian retorts, Shavian insults or Wilde epigrams; the editorial replies, however, rarely rose above banality or hackneyed jokes about local newspapers. Has the art of innuendo or sarcastic abuse declined? Most of the entries assumed the justice of the charges made by "Constant Reader"—misprints, the *faux pas* in wedding reports, illustrations wrongly captioned, the superior qualities of a rival paper—absorptive or inflammable. Others treated the perennial bore or crank with contempt encouraged by wartime circulation pressure. Send him, wrote R. S. Jaffray, "the penitential bughouse letter." R. L. Dunlop conceded the error of his ways, explaining to his correspondent that the book reviews were a travesty of all that is good in literature because "our reviewer is a very distinguished Chinese Scholar" who "sometimes has difficulty in remembering to read horizontally instead of vertically." The most presentable entries came from Sir Robert Witt (two guineas) and B. Turner (one guinea).

Sir,—I have received your letter signed "Constant Reader" with tempered regret. Your studied anonymity was unnecessary, for I recognise the type and need not recognise the individual. Dean Swift pointed out that there is nothing constant in this world but inconstancy. As to "Reader" I would inquire, like Philip the Deacon of the Eunuch of Ethiopia, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" I am grateful that you did not transfer your patronage to that other journal to which you refer, without informing me. For it has brought to my notice a periodical of which, with some knowledge of Fleet Street and to my shame, I had never heard. Our loss will be its gain, at least so long as it survives or you remain constant. Perhaps, too, you may some day find yourself in an editorial chair like mine, for was it not Crabbe who mused, "Who often reads will sometimes wish to write"? When dawns that happy, or unhappy, day, you may recall your recent reasoned and well-founded criticism of my editorials. But it was a famous novelist, not an editor, who discovered that "Journalists say a thing they know isn't true in the hope that if they go on saying it long enough it will be true." Hence I remain, Yours truly,

SIR ROBERT WITT

Dear "Constant Reader," I deplore
Your most ill-chosen metaphor
And in reply I feel I must
Declare your views to be unjust.
To say our politics are limp
(Comparing us with Col. Blimp)
When we have made a gallant stand
In our beloved Motherland
For Liberty, Fraternity,
And Social Inequality—
Is hard on men who serve the nation
In such a worthy occupation.
There are no stains, you will agree,
Upon our former policy—
We represent all peaceful men—
We never championed E.A.M.
We've always guarded loyally
The sacred rights of property
And never English culture mixed
With bandits, knaves and Bolsheviks—
And yet you say you will transfer
To some unknown competitor!
The arguments which you enlist
Are criminal—quite socialist!
Is this what we are fighting for?
Yours, "Disappointed Editor."

B. TURNER

Company Meeting

CHARTERED BANK OF NDIA, AUSTRALIA & CHINA

MR. V. A. GRANTHAM'S STATEMENT

THE ninety-first ordinary general meeting of the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China will be held in London, March 28th.

The following is an extract from the statement by Mr. V. A. Grantham (chairman) circulated with the accounts:—

The figures of the Balance Sheet are greater than on any previous occasion, the total at £95,564,109, showing an increase of £6,645,851 over that of last year. Certain alterations in the form of the Balance Sheet have been made, at the suggestion of the Auditors, but changes of importance are few, however, and on the liabilities side are confined to Current and Other Deposits, which are up by £7,839,772. This increase is offset on the Assets side by increases in Cash, in Government and Other Securities, and in Bills of Exchange, including Treasury Bills, of £4,297,429, £2,357,094 and £1,772,924 respectively, while the Balance of Remittances, Drafts, etc., in transit between Head Office, Branches and Agencies, etc., has decreased by some £1,992,361. The ratio of cash to our "call" liabilities is 23.2 per cent., and if Government and Other Securities, which mainly consist of short-dated securities, and Bills of Exchange, including Treasury Bills, are included, the ratio is 2.2 per cent. The figures relating to enemy-occupied Agencies and Branches are included in these totals, but as these are identical with those included last year, it will be clear that the substantial increases noted above occurred at the Agencies where we continue to be actively represented and will help us to meet, without any undue strain, the needs of our Clients during the approaching period of reconstruction.

The Profit for the year amounts to £320,999, which I trust, in view of the conditions ruling throughout the world, you will consider satisfactory. We brought forward from last year a balance of £371,372, so that we have a total of £692,372 to deal with. An interim dividend at the rate of 5 per cent. per annum for the six months to June 30th was paid last year, absorbing £75,000, and we propose that a dividend for the half-year to December 31st last at 5 per cent. per annum, costing £75,000, should be paid; that £50,000 be transferred to the Officers' Pension Fund and £5,000 to the Widows' and Orphans' Fund; that £100,000 be set aside on account of Contingencies, and the balance of £387,372 carried forward.

Your Board is not unmindful of the interests of the Stockholders, who have been so patient during the difficult days of war, but until the reopening of our Branches in the Far East enables us to be sure that the provisions against losses which we have made are adequate, you will agree that it is best to follow a conservative course in the allocation of Profits.

Dependent as we in this country are upon imports for our very livelihood, no excuse is necessary for stressing also the importance of exports—in other words, of two-sided trade. His Majesty's Government have announced their intention of promoting the expansion of the export trade of this country immediately a substantial transfer of man-power becomes possible. This Bank is prepared to do all in its power to assist them in the rehabilitation and expansion of the Eastern section of this trade.

Personal

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